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“ Her heart throbbed in response to his words.”

Frontispiece.—Page 58.

The Corner in Coffee

BY

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*Author of "The Southerners," "Sir Henry Morgan—Buccaneer,"
"For the Freedom of the Sea," "A Doctor of Philosophy," Etc.*



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The Corner in Coffee

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To

My Valued Friends

HARRY AND ANNA NASON

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PREFACE

A Preliminary Discourse to the Reader

One day last winter I received a request from one of my good editorial friends for a short story. Notwithstanding the facetious statements which, with many others equally untrue, circulate in the would-be humorous columns of the daily press about this particular author and the quantity of literary material he is supposed to have on hand—or should I say, on tap?—at all times, he did not have a scrap of manuscript with which he could meet the demand. To turn down such a request would, I suppose, have been pain and grief to any author. Certainly it would to me. Therefore, I boldly announced that while I did not have a story I would write one for him. Easier said than done. To require a man who hasn't a story in him at the time

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to tell one, is to set him at the hardest of tasks. With a woman, they say, it is different—but I digress.

Having agreed to write a story which I did not have, I knew I had to get one somewhere, for as I have elsewhere remarked, to write a short story is a very much more difficult undertaking than to write a long one. I had plots for long novels to burn—perhaps most of them would better be burned, by the way!—but short stories; well, they are the results of inspiration or communication. Like poetry, they are born, not made. A happy chance at this juncture threw me in contact with an unique character, a man from Mexico, who could not have written a long tale to save his life, but who had short stories to give away, for they had all happened to him. He was visiting at my house. I got him into a corner one night and never let him get out until I had the particular story I wanted. The editor who had written me received the story

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a few days after and liked it. The check that came back with delightful promptness would more than have paid for my agreeable guest's board bill, I may remark, if there had been a bill to pay.

If the reader be interested in the short story to which I have alluded he will find it affixed to the novel at page 269, and if he should take the trouble to compare the two Tillottsons he will see how I have developed the hero from my original conception of him; and which, in justice to my entertaining visitor, I may add differs widely from him also.

In passing, it is said that everybody has at least one story in him. That man had a hundred. I am going to write the other ninety-nine at my leisure —provided proper encouragement be extended.

Now some of those critics whose calm, dispassionate opinions, as expressed in the book reviews in the literary columns of the daily papers, are so valuable to authors, especially when they do not copy publishers' circulars, had remarked apropos of one

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of my previous novels—and incidentally my most successful book (to date)—“Who cares anything about the love affairs of a young man of twenty-two and a girl of eighteen anyway?”

This impressed me profoundly. Who does care outside of the parties interested and their sisters, and their cousins, and their aunts? I solemnly resolved that the next novel I wrote should contain a hero and heroine who had reached the age of discretion—if in a novel which was the story of a love affair such an age may ever be attained. Consequently, after my success with that particular short story, I decided to put the same character I had discovered and imagined into a novel, and I also determined to make my new hero at least fifty, while the heroine should have reached the mature age of thirty-five.

“Let us see,” said I to myself, “if the heart experiences of these two will appeal to the blasé critics and others who are surfeited with sweet-and-twenty.”

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Will they, do they, dear reader?

Another point. One evening in the Waldorf, waiting for a visitor, I happened to sit in the corridor opposite to a very striking little man. I studied him carefully, and at the proper time transferred his outward personality to these pages. He just fitted the combination of reality and imagination in my prospective hero. I never saw the gentleman before or since. He didn't know me from Adam, but if any telepathy should enable him to identify himself with the hero of this veracious romance, I hope he will think I have given him a good character.

With my friend from Mexico (E. S. Barrett) to start me off, with my mental picture of the man in the Waldorf, with my resolution as to age, I developed this "Corner in Coffee" on paper. A well-informed literary friend of mine (W. A. Bradley) knew a kind-hearted broker (A. A. Fowler); the broker knew an obliging firm of coffee dealers (Hard

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& Rand); the coffee dealers knew a courteous official (C. B. Stroud) of the Coffee Exchange. When I got through with that imposing line I couldn't say that I knew all they knew, for the more I saw of them the more I found they knew—about coffee and other things!—but I acquired enough information about speculation in coffee to cause me to make a solemn resolution never to touch it except as a beverage. N. B.—I never speculate in, or on, anything, except possibly on the probable editorial judgment about some submitted manuscript!

I have also an uncle (W. P. Brady) who knows the United States Government, or a very important functionary thereof (L. M. Shaw). Through him there were franked to me several tons—more or less—of public documents bearing upon coffee, published by the Treasury Department, all of which I diligently examined. The result is here before you.

One thing more before I reluctantly allow you

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—if you have been wise enough to read the preface
—to attack the tale. I remember reading in some
forgotten book of an Italian Prince who once burned
down his magnificent palace filled with the treasures
of the ages, that he might have the privilege of
carrying from the flames in his arms his otherwise
untouchable lady love. Why should an American
gentleman be forced to give way to an Italian
Prince even in such an extravagance of devotion?
Would you blame Tillottson? Think of the in-
imitable Miss Livingstone—of thirty-five—and as
you close the book I hope you may be able to take
my view of his heroic conduct and comply cheer-
fully with this closing admonition:

“*Nunc Plaudite!*”

CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY.

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK,
Christmas Eve, 1903.

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“THE PLAY'S THE THING!”

The author, having received a large number of applications for the dramatic rights of this book, the dramatization having been made, and arrangements for its production having been completed, has amused himself by preparing the following specimen programme.

May the contemplation of the names of the *dramatis personæ* also amuse the reader and incline him, or her, to wish to know them better in the following pages!

CHARACTERS IN THE BOOK

- 1 MR. ELIJAH D. TILLOTTSON, aged fifty; a civil engineer, who attempts a seemingly impossible task for a reward he very much desires.
- 2 THE HONORABLE REGINALD KENTIGERN KILLEGREW DE BEVOISE SMITH-POGIS, son of Lord Revelstone, “born Smith, purchased Pogis,” aged twenty-four; a young aspirant for a heart, who decidedly does not wish to be adopted.

“The Play’s the Thing!”

3 MR. CUNNINGHAME CUTTER, of uncertain age, ditto morals; a broker who goes broke to the great delectation of the reader—or, should I say the audience?

These three are suitors of

4 MISS CONSTANCE VAN BENTHUYSEN LIVINGSTONE, aged thirty-five! Miss Livingstone is the personification of every virtue and the possessor of every charm except that of extreme youth, yet in the end she has to do her own wooing!

To relieve and accentuate
Miss Livingstone there are

5 MISS GERTRUDE VAN STUYLER, a young woman of fashion who strives to express the opinion of “Society.”

6 MISS GRETCHEN DE KAATER, a maiden lady of advanced years and narrow views, who still thinks Washington Square the social, mental and moral centre of New York.

Then there comes

7 MR. BERTRAM VAN BENTHUYSEN LIVINGSTONE, Miss Livingstone’s. only brother (N. B. “Bertie” and “Connie” are both orphans). Bertie, who is engaged to Miss Van Stuyler, has views of his own about his sister’s future, also her money. He divides with Cutter the villainy of the story, and the reader will rejoice to see him get his “come-uppance” at last,

“The Play’s the Thing!”

There is one other speaking
part of much importance,

8 COLONEL PINCKNEY TOLLIVER JOHNSTONE, a Southern gentleman with Western modifications, who goes armed on Wall Street for fear of his life.

As for the rest, Cutter has a partner,

9 DREWITT, who says little;

The Livingstones, a butler,

10 WILLIAMS, who says less.

In addition to the above,
there are a number of thinking parts, as brokers,
clerks, reporters, servants and the general public.

Among the properties a high place must be accorded

THE TICKER !

SCENE OF THE STORY

NEW YORK CITY. The action takes place in THE COFFEE EXCHANGE, Hanover Square, at the offices of CUTTER, DREWITT & Co., and of BERTIE LIVINGSTONE; and at THE LIVINGSTONE HOME on upper Fifth Avenue, facing the Park.

TIME OF THE CORNER

TO-DAY

THE CORNER IN COFFEE

CHAPTER I

THE SUITORS OF MISS LIVINGSTONE

Miss Constance Van Benthuyzen Livingstone had reached the agreeable age of thirty-five. Of ancient lineage, ample fortune, assured station, she would have been able, under any consideration, easily to take a leading position in the highest society, had these been her only qualifications for leadership. When to these mundane advantages were added a striking beauty of face and figure, the charm of a cultivated mind, the sparkle of a delicate wit, and an ineffable grace and graciousness, heritage of generations of courtly and distinguished ancestors, it is easy to see why her belle-ship in New York's most exclusive circles had for many years been unquestioned.

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Why Miss Livingstone had not married long since was a profound mystery to herself, to her many friends and acquaintances, and also to the general public, which avidly read everything that appeared about her in the society columns of the daily papers—and it must be admitted that the items were many and the items were long that treated of her doings. Certainly her state of single blessedness—if blessed it were!—was not due to lack of opportunity to change it; nor was it due to any inability on her part to conceive the necessary affection for the opposite sex; nor for that could the opposite sex be fairly blamed either.

Indeed, Miss Livingstone had been in love many times; she had been definitely engaged twice, and indefinitely more times than that; and she had been loved by—even she herself could not tell how many men! It was truly rare that one so entirely available as she from a material and personal stand-point, had entered the matrimonial market. Nor was she out of it yet.

The Suitors of Miss Livingstone

Age—for thirty-five may properly be so called, she admitted herself—had not withered her; nor had the fact that she had been the custom of many seasons staled her infinite variety. And there were not lacking many who, from various motives but with much truth, said that she was more charming, delectable and desirable now than ever.

Attrition with the great and gay world, the admiration of many men, the adoration of a few, bitter experiences with two—an English marquis and an Italian prince—while they had modified her character, had not robbed her either of her freshness or of her sincerity. The subtle evanescent charm of youth and innocence had left her, it is true, in the departed years; but there had been added to her character a ripeness and completeness which more than compensated for the loss.

For the rest, she had been everywhere, she had known everybody, she had done everything. She knew society as well as she knew her A, B, C's. She had read much in the practical literature of life

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and experience, and it is a tribute to her native buoyancy and good sense that she did not turn from it in disgust. She had eaten of the Tree of Knowledge and still lived in the Garden of Eden—the social Eden of her day. She was too sane to give it up—yet!

Yet she had, in a large measure, abdicated her hitherto undisputed social leadership. She had generously yielded the first place, which she might have retained as long as Diane de Poitiers or Ninon de l'Enclos had retained their youth, to younger aspirants for the favor of the small but very madding crowd of social celebrities.

She had withdrawn herself from the world awhile of late, but not altogether. She was tired, just a little, not of life, but of society. She had tried it faithfully and found that after all there was little in it for her. She had not reached the stage of complete renunciation, however, but from the lofty pose of experience and with a touch of satiety, she contemplated it with a growing sense of distance.

The Suitors of Miss Livingstone

She was not without ardent suitors even yet. The first of these in point of social standing was the Honorable Reginald Kentigern Killegrew de Bevoise Smith-Pogis, the eldest son and heir of the Right Honorable John William Smith-Pogis—born Smith, purchased Pogis—first Baron Revelstone.

This gallant youth, who had reached the advanced age of twenty-four, and had all the callow Englishman's inexperience of mature life, was wildly, passionately—and hopelessly—devoted to Miss Livingstone. Disparity in years made no difference to him. He was, and always would be, her slave.

The Honorable Reginald Kentigern Killegrew et cetera's father was a man more wealthy than he was noble. Cynics used to say that the bottle, or the vat, should have been prominent on his coat of arms, for he had made a vast fortune by brewing the ale when it is brown, to the great delectation of the temperate Englishmen.

Another prominent suitor was Mr. Cunningham Cutter, of Cutter, Drewitt & Co., a leading firm,

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perhaps the leading firm, of coffee brokers in New York. Mr. Cutter did not belong originally to the four hundred, but it was rumored that he would soon have money enough to enable him to attain to that exclusive degree. His business connections, which were extensive, had enabled him to acquire a foot-hold in the charmed circle, which he had assiduously improved with a success which was quite as marked as that attendant upon his operations on the exchange.

Nor was his introduction to society a chance affair. He strove always to eliminate the element of chance from all his operations, by the way. No, he had schemed and planned for the social entrée as cunningly and as pertinaciously as he had ever engineered a deal in Hanover Square. It came through Mr. Bertram Van Benthuyzen Livingstone.

Bertram and Constance were orphans, the man being his sister's junior by two years. No commiseration need be wasted upon the pair on account of their orphaned state. Old John Van Benthuyzen

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Livingstone had lived long enough to increase the ample competence he had inherited from his Dutch forbears to one of those vast fortunes of latter-day Americanism, which are so common as to become rather boring when they are exploited in the press.

Beginning in a rather small way, old John Livingstone had become the greatest dealer in coffee in the United States—a bona fide dealer, not a speculator, that is. On his demise some ten years before, the fortune had been divided equally between his two surviving children, his wife having predeceased him by a number of years.

Bertram, or “Bertie” as he was generally called, had taken hold of the affairs of the great coffee business with vigor and capacity, and had eventually formed a close alliance with the great English firm of Parbuckle and Company so that they practically controlled the coffee market of the world. It was a trust *à deux*. The two portions of the Livingstone fortune had not been separated but had grown together, so rumor had it, to a fabulous amount.

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Recently, however, Miss Livingstone had withdrawn from the firm, and had turned the greater portion of her moiety into negotiable securities—for what purpose she scarcely knew—bonds and stocks, which paid a fair dividend and which provided her with an income more than sufficient to meet any possible requirements.

Perhaps she had taken this step because her brother, not content with his legitimate profits, great though they were, recently had commenced to dabble in stocks and bonds in spite of her advice. Not for investment but for purposes of speculation. He was a lion in the coffee business but a lamb “in the street,” and not even the enormous fortune which he had received and accumulated could long stand the tremendous drains upon it. His sister had positively refused to countenance or to join in any of his operations.

Mr. Cutter was not a party to any of Bertie’s speculations either. He was a broker in coffee, and that was a thing that Bertie had not speculated in

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heretofore. Although Mr. Cutter was thoroughly aware of Livingstone's course and could foresee its end, as any wise man could for that matter, there was nothing he could do to stop it. A warning from him would have been presumptuous.

Besides, Mr. Cutter did not want it stopped. He was making money in the legitimate and illegitimate methods of his profession nearly as fast as Bertie was losing it in the recklessness of his operations. And Mr. Cutter wanted a great deal of money. He wanted enough, if necessary, to buy Miss Livingstone. And Miss Livingstone rather liked him. The odd and unusual always attracted her. Mr. Cutter was a year or two older than she, but he was so strong, so keen, so cool, so powerful, so unlike most of those she met, that she felt attracted to him.

It took nerve even to be a broker on 'Change. To spend the greater part of one's life in the Wall Street district; to be brought into direct competition with the master minds in finance and trade of the world in playing the great game of speculation, gambling

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on such a scale as is exhibited nowhere else on the globe, requires a congeries of varied talents as rare as they are necessary. And to be successful in the struggle implies the possession of qualities of the very highest order.

Mr. Cutter had all these requisites for success except mere physical bravery. Bravery being, as has been said, a quality of the blood and courage an attribute of the mind, he was naturally deficient in the former, although he abounded in the latter. He could, and did, engineer and carry out deals on the Stock Exchange which involved tremendous mental exertions and required the highest mental, or moral, courage. When he was vaccinated a few years before in a small-pox scare, which had scared him more than anyone else, perhaps, he had fainted at the touch of the point or the sight of the blood on his arm.

He concealed this weakness from the world, raged and fought against it in his heart, but could neither overcome it nor deny it to himself. He could have

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beggared and broken the hearts of thousands by a deal without a qualm, but the cutting of a finger made him sick at the soul. Physical pain or physical terror mastered him at once.

However, this painful and distressing weakness did not prevent him from being a highly successful operator. Men do not settle differences with pistols and swords any more on 'Change or elsewhere, especially in the Wall street district, but with checks. Mr. Cutter could face any number of checks, either as receiver or utterer thereof, without blanching.

It is quite possible that Mr. Cutter—his physical weakness being sedulously concealed—because of the very qualities that differentiated him from the men who usually surrounded Miss Livingstone, might have been successful ultimately, had it not been for the advent of Elijah D. Tillottson.

It was half after eleven in the morning of one of those delightful days with which New York is sometimes blessed in the beginning of the last week in October. For that great city, then, if ever, come

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perfect days, in spite of the fact that June is invariably the chosen season for poets. Perhaps this fact distinguishes the country from the town. Spring is the time for green fields and leafy trees. Fall is the period for brick walls and asphalt pavements.

The Van Benthuyzen Livingstones, Constance and Bertie, still lived together, both being as yet unmarried, and had opened their town house on upper Fifth avenue, overlooking the Park, a little earlier than usual. Mr. Tillottson, with that astonishing unconventionality which characterized all of his actions, was making a surprisingly early call upon the hostess.

Miss Livingstone had gone with him to the theatre, a box party engineered by Mr. Tillottson, the night before, and as the performance had been succeeded by a supper, also engineered by Mr. Tillottson, Miss Livingstone had not retired until very early in the morning. Mr. Tillottson, on leaving her that night, had asked permission to call upon her the next day, which permission she had willingly granted.

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But she had not dreamed that he would present himself at such an unprecedented hour. On account of this mistake of his, he had been kept waiting for three-quarters of an hour while Miss Livingstone dressed herself and partook of a hasty cup of coffee in quicker time than she had exhibited for years.

Another woman, she thought, might have been offended at being forced to cut short her sleep and breakfast in this hurried manner. But what was the use of being offended at Mr. Tillottson? Miss Livingstone's curiosity was somewhat piqued, as her interest had been excited, by her caller. Mr. Tillottson had informed her, in his blunt way, that he had something important he wanted to tell her and he wanted to tell her quick. She was more than anxious to know what it was that made him so early and so insistent.

He was ushered into the library instead of the great drawing-room overlooking the Park. The library did not overlook anything but an area, but inasmuch as its square back window was filled with

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a superb conception in exquisite color from the Tiffany studio, which admitted the light but through which nobody could see, it did not make much difference what was beyond.

Mr. Tillottson had never been in so magnificent a room in his life. Cases filled with rare books in beautiful bindings, éditions de luxe, priceless old copies, first impressions, which he could not appreciate but which he felt instinctively were of great value, lined the larger portion of the walls. Wherever there was an opening, pictures in keeping with the wealth and good taste of the Livingstones diversified the space.

The dark mahogany furniture, upholstered in red leather, was richly carved and of massive proportions. His feet sank into rugs which, to his critical eye, seemed scarcely in keeping with the richness of the room. Many of them were old, faded, and oriental and bizarre in color. He did not know that some people would have hung such rugs on the walls and cherished them as priceless treasures.

The Suitors of Miss Livingstone

The room would have daunted many people not accustomed to such things, but it took a great deal to daunt Elijah D. Tillottson. He had travelled far and had seen much, and, as he said himself, he "wasn't often phased by anything he ran up against."

For the rest, Mr. Tillottson was a small man. He only overtopped Miss Livingstone by about two inches. When she rolled her hair high, as she sometimes did, they were just of a size. He overtopped her fifteen years in age, too. His hair and mustache were white. So was the little imperial which he persisted in wearing. His complexion, however, was fair, not to say ruddy, and his eyes were as blue and as bright as steel. There wasn't a wrinkle about him in spite of his white hairs and fifty years. He was good to look at, a handsome man, in fact, and he could shoot with a "gun," or "Winchester," as unerringly as the archer who turned Philip of Macedon into a Cyclops could with his bow and arrow.

Like Miss Livingstone, Tillottson had pretty well

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exhausted what the world had to offer him. A young civil engineer, after graduating from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology nearly thirty years before, he had gone first to the West and thence through Mexico and so on down to the tropics, *i.e.*, Brazil, to seek his fortune.

As a railroad surveyor, contractor, builder and general promoter, he had accumulated perhaps five millions of dollars, and with that in negotiable securities and an option on some mining property in Mexico, which might possibly become of value, he had come to New York, "back to civilization," he phrased it, to see a little of life before he died.

There he met Miss Livingstone.

A chance meeting at the Waldorf one evening, with Mr. Jones-Todd, a gentleman temporarily sojourning there while his Madison avenue home was being renovated, had introduced him into society, and society had eagerly taken him up. A dinner at the Jones-Todds' had brought him in conjunction with Miss Livingstone, and she had added a new

The Suitors of Miss Livingstone

interest to his life. Like that lady, Tillottson had loved many times and often. He had had *affaires de cœur* all over the world, but that was in his younger days, and of late he had put such things by, he fondly thought, forever. He found to his great surprise that he should have to begin all over again.

He had never before seen a woman like Constance Livingstone. His heart, which he had thought immune to feminine influence, had gone straight out to her. With a directness which, after all, amounted to the highest finesse, he had devoted himself to her.

She might have suspected in the case of any one else what was going on in the man's heart, but his very unconventionality disarmed her suspicion. She rode with him in the Park, she went with him to the theatre; that is, in the parties which, through her assistance, he was enabled to form. She had even entertained him at dinner, and now, after one week's acquaintance, she was intensely curious as to what he might have to say.

Tillottson had a moral courage as great as Cutter's

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and a physical courage to match, as well. If he had boasted—which he never did—he would have said that he had never yet been in a situation in which he had shown the slightest evidence of fear; but as he sat there in that magnificent room waiting for the entrance of Miss Livingstone his heart thumped like a schoolboy's. He extended his hand at last and observed, in shamed surprise, that it was actually trembling.

“By Jacks!” he muttered, “this’ll never do! A babe could get the drop on me now. I never felt like this before. I’ve sure got it hard this time. I wonder what she’ll do? The idea of me—” He had never lacked audacity in his life, but now it was different. “Well,” so his thoughts ran on, “I’ve got to do it. I’ve just got to tell that woman I want her for my wife or——”

CHAPTER II

THE AMAZING PROPOSITION OF MR. TILLOTTSON

“Good morning, Mr. Tillottson.”

The voice of the woman he loved broke in upon his reveries as she entered the library.

Tillottson had seen his divinity in a riding-habit well calculated to display her perfect figure; he had admired her in full dress at dinner; in demi-toilet at the theatre; in walking-dress on the street; in driving-costume on the avenue; but there was a new touch of feminine sweetness in the pretty morning gown, an exquisite simplicity of fresh whiteness which fairly bewildered him. And it seemed, to his distracted mind, that with every frock she wore she exhibited a different phase of character to him. This time it was a sweetness and innocence that might have befitted an ingénue of eighteen; nor was there

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any assumption about it either. It was simply my lady's mood.

“Good morning, Miss Livingstone. I've seen you in a lot of clothes this week—I didn't know one woman could wear so many different get-ups—but I believe I like you better in this white thing than in any of the rest. You look as fresh as a prairie wild rose on a dewy morning, only that is pink and you are white.”

“Thank you,” laughed Miss Livingstone. “You are as poetic as you are frank, and both poetry and frankness are novelties in New York. Won't you be seated?”

“Thank you. If you'll sit down I'll stand up. I feel better standing up. I can face things calmer. I've got—I told you I had something to say to you.”

“I remember. What is it?” replied the lady, graciously, at the same time disposing herself in a large chair by the side of the desk, which permitted her sheer and delicate garment to fall from her waist

The Amazing Proposition of Mr. Tillottson

in ripples of white, and which was just high enough from the floor to enable her cunningly to disclose a charming foot, which took no disgrace from shoe or stocking which clad it. Long practice in the past had made her perfect in the apparently artless manœuvre. Of late she had not been wont to do such things, but Mr. Tillottson's advent unconsciously awoke a long-buried desire to please, nay, more than that, to impress deeply.

“By Jacks!” exclaimed Tillottson, utterly distracted by the proceeding, gazing fatuously upon that foot and endeavoring to suppress a frantic desire to prostrate himself before it.

“You had something to say to me?” asked Miss Livingstone, smiling pleasantly, and quite conscious of Mr. Tillottson's emotions at the sight of her foot, which, indeed, she had placed there for the very purpose of awakening his admiration. She was quite proud of that pretty member herself.

“Yes. You won't mind if I walk up and down while I talk, will you?”

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“Not at all. Do exactly as you please.”

“I can stand still enough when it comes to facing a man, but a woman unsettles me and I get relief in motion.”

“I am not nervous, Mr. Tillottson, and your restless pacing does not annoy me.”

“I know you’re not nervous. I’ve seen that you are as cool as they make them. I’m accustomed to sizing up a man, and I’m not without experience of women, either, and I’ve sized you up for all right, Miss Livingstone.”

It was a direct compliment without any poetry in it, but it flattered the woman strangely. Here was a man who was accustomed to mingle with men. He had, as he told her, sized her up “for all right.” It pleased her.

“Well, I might as well shoot straight at the mark, Miss Livingstone,” broke in Mr. Tillottson’s voice upon her reflections. “Miss Livingstone—” he stopped and looked keenly at her. “You are not in love with any man, are you?”

The Amazing Proposition of Mr. Tillottson

“Mr. Tillottson!” exclaimed the woman, straightening up.

Then she laughed softly, and sank back into her chair once more. What was the use of being annoyed with this unusual man; why try to be conventional with him? He meant nothing disrespectful, that was quite evident. He had spoken to her frankly as man to man. And suddenly she seemed to realize that it was one of those little moments in life when conventionalities seem very small things, even to those who have been brought up on them. He should be answered in the same spirit in which he questioned.

“I do not know what right you have to ask me such a thing, Mr. Tillottson,” she said at last, “nor what makes me answer, but I will tell you the truth. I am not.”

“That’s good! I thought not. You don’t look as if you are in love with anybody. I sized you up all right, I told you.”

“Have you been spending your time in ‘sizing me up,’ as you say?”

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“I sure have. I ain’t—I haven’t been, I should say—doing anything since I first saw you but that.”

“Really!” said the woman.

“You wanted to know,” continued the man, impetuously, “why I asked you. I’ll tell you. I am in love with you myself. I want you to marry me! Will you, Miss Livingstone?”

“Gracious heavens!” exclaimed Miss Livingstone, under her breath, greatly astonished at this declaration and its consequent question, which, in that it was at least novel in its method, was not without a certain charm.

“Mr. Tillottson,” she said aloud, at last, “I must say I am surprised.”

“You ought not to be. You must have had people in love with you before, I take it. You ought to know the rules of the game by this time, Miss Livingstone.”

“I do, and I have had people in love with me, of course, as you say,” returned the woman, biting her

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lips to keep down a smile, "but the circumstances are so unusual, you know, in this case."

"Of course they are. It's foolish, perhaps, for me, from one point of view, to love you. Certainly it's foolish, and hopeless, too. Yet down where I have been living we don't take a man for anything but his real value. You've got lots of money, ancient family, position, all that. You could have anybody, and why take me? say you. And why take me? say I. I'm not poor. I've got a pretty comfortable fortune. Enough to give you plenty to eat and put good clothes on your back, like you're wearin' now, though you do seem to have a mighty sight of 'em—which I wouldn't begrudge you, far from it—and you could have a reasonable good time, too, with me, I'm sure. I'm not exactly a nobody, either, though I say it, as I should not. My family came to Massachusetts some considerable time ago, I believe. But I'll admit I'm not in it with you on that score, or any other, for a minute. There's only one thing I have got that over-matches what you've got."

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“ You over-praise—over-value me, yet I am curious to know what that last is, Mr. Tillottson.”

“ My love for you, Miss Livingstone. Now, I’m no chicken in affairs of the heart. I have loved lots of women, and have loved ’em hard. At least, I thought I did, at the time—I suppose you have loved some yourself? ”

“ I have,” returned the woman, promptly, gazing at this extraordinary wooer.

“ I thought so; but you don’t love any one now, do you? ”

“ No one. Do you? ”

Perhaps from that question it might be argued that she was not unwilling to hear the tale told again. At any rate he was prompt enough and definite enough in his reply.

“ Do I love any one? I should say so. Didn’t I tell you? You! I’m no boy, and I know what I’m saying. I never felt like this before. I was always master of myself before; but now I tell you it gives me palpitation of the heart, brings out the

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perspiration on my forehead, just to look at you. If you were to draw on me now, Miss Livingstone——”

“Draw on you?”

“Yes—a gun, you know. I couldn’t do a thing. I’m just helpless. I know, it’s the real thing this trip. If I can’t have you for my wife, well, the game’s up for me—with women, that is. As I said before, I’m not a good match for you in anything but one thing. You’re beautiful enough, and rich enough, and fine enough, for a Prince, and——”

“I have had a Prince——”

“And turned him down? Good! What you want’s an American that will understand you, love you, worship you, adore you, like I do. By Jacks! Miss Livingstone, maybe it seems a joke to you. You laughed at first. I don’t blame you. But whether you take me or not, I’ll belong to you for the rest of my life. I don’t know why you should take me, either. I didn’t come here with any particular hopes that you would. I am a plain, blunt fellow, and I must be a lot older than you——”

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“How old are you, Mr. Tillottson?”

“Fifty.”

“How old do you think I am?”

Society would have instantly embraced such an opportunity by saying twenty-two. Mr. Tillottson wasn’t built that way, however.

“Well,” he said, after a momentary reflection, “I should think you were about thirty-three.”

“Gracious!” exclaimed the woman, sitting upright once more in great amazement.

“I don’t judge by your looks, Miss Livingstone,” continued the man, bravely and honestly; “you look as sweet and young and fresh as a girl, especially in that white thing you have on this morning, but by your mind, your thoughts, what you do, what you say. They seem older. How old are you, anyway?”

“Thirty-five,” answered Miss Livingstone, faintly.

“Good! That’s just a proper age for me. I’ve always preferred ‘em at thirty-five. As for me,

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though I am fifty, I can whip my weight in wild-cats any time."

"Is that a proper qualification for a husband?"

"Is it? I don't know." He laughed heartily in appreciation of her quick thrust. "But my hand is as steady and my eye as keen as they ever have been since I was born, except when I met you, and then everything went to pieces. Now, I know you don't love me. At least you can't, yet. Maybe you never can. But you don't love anybody else, you say. [There's one thing about you I like, and that is you know how to tell the truth better than any woman I ever saw. You're like a man in that."

"Thank you."

"Oh, don't thank me. You're like a man in lots of things."

"So you think me a nice manly woman, do you?" she laughed, yet with a tinge of anxiety in her merriment.

"No, no, God forbid! Haven't I just told you I

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love the ground you walk on? I don't like manly women. Those that can rope steers, and pull guns, and all that. But you have real manly virtues, Miss Livingstone, softened and modified by womanly touches. Your brother will soon be married, I hear. They tell me you don't go much in society. Now, here's a chance to get a man, not much of a one so far as size and appearance go, I'll have to admit, but a real man, just the same, if I do say it myself. And a man that'll love you and give you everything you want. A man that'll devote himself to you entirely."

"They all say that."

"Well, I mean it. I've got no mother or relatives to annoy you, and you are alone in the world too, except for your brother. What do you say, Miss Livingstone? Will you take me?"

It was a perplexing moment. Wonderful are the ways of Cupid. He aims his dart with impartial directness at the hearts of old bachelors who have gone through numberless campaigns like Mr. Elijah

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D. Tillottson, and on occasion he sends the arrow through the tender bosoms of ladies of mature years who have fondly imagined that they have done with love forever.

If any one had asked Miss Livingstone yesterday what were the qualifications she required in a suitor, that fastidious and critical lady, if she treated the matter seriously, would have described the very antipodes of Mr. Elijah D. Tillottson. Yet, singular as it may appear, she felt at that moment a strange and unusual flutter in her heart, a reminiscence of past experiences, which she had imagined would never return. She had not been so strangely affected by an appeal of this kind for years. She had felt herself equal to any hymeneal proposition whatsoever, however startling and sudden its character. How was it then, under the bright blue eyes of Mr. Elijah D. Tillottson, in the face of a question of that character, she became so strangely nonplussed?

“ You seem to be hangin’ fire a long time, Miss

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Livingstone," he said, at last, stopping his restless promenade across the room, "but take your time. Delays, I guess, are favorable to me. There's something gained on my side that you didn't say 'no' right off, ain't there?"

Miss Livingstone gave a sudden start. Why on earth hadn't she said "no" right off to this preposterous proposition? Her mind began to seek excuses for her hesitation. There was some truth in what he had said. Her brother was devoted to Gertrude Van Stuyler. When they were married in the near future she would be one too many in the house. She was tired of society. It had nothing to offer her. She had tried men of the conventional stamp and had found them unsatisfactory. There was something in the erect figure of the little man before her that was most attractive. She had lived long enough, using his own language, to "size up" her suitors herself. He was in love with her, there was no doubt of it. A true, genuine, overwhelming passion rang in his voice. Her heart throbbed faintly

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in response to his words, greatly to her surprise. Yet—

“I know there is one great disadvantage I possess—” broke in Mr. Tillottson again. Certainly his good angel must have been whispering in his ear at that moment. “I ain’t—I am not, I should say, what you call cultivated. I began well, but I have lived on the frontiers of life and civilization, in the West and South America, so long among people my inferiors in every way that I’ve become rough, uncouth, perhaps. I am not what I might have been, but I ain’t—I am not——”

He stamped his foot with a little movement of impatience over his persistent blundering.

“Say ‘ain’t,’ if you like, Mr. Tillottson. I rather enjoy it. It is unusual and refreshing. I never hear it.”

“I am not an entirely uneducated person,” he went on, oblivious to her last remark. “You would never believe it, I suppose, so I brought this along to show you.”

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He lifted a little packet from the desk where he had thrown it when he had entered the room and handed it to her.

“That’s my diploma from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I was just nineteen when I graduated, and, if you’ll forgive me, it was at the head of my class. I think I was the youngest man that ever got that sheepskin, and while you don’t know what I’ve done in the world since then, and it ain’t pleasant for me to have to tell you, yet, if you conclude to say ‘yes,’ I’ll take you to see some of the finest bits of railroad engineering over the Andes and down in old Mexico, that’s to be seen anywhere. I’m responsible for ‘em. We’ll go down in style, and in our own private car, too.”

“I always travel in my own private car,” interrupted Miss Livingstone, quietly.

“Do you? Well, I can keep it up. That’s all.”

“And do you think you could support an expensive wife like myself?”

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“Could I? Just try me. Say, does that mean that you’re thinkin’ about saying ‘yes’?”

“I think so,” answered Miss Livingstone, softly. “I believe I am considering the possibility.”

Her heart was running counter to her judgment. Not a novel contradiction in similar situations. Tillottson had apparently worked the impossible. She was actually willing to consider him in the light of a suitor!

The man ceased pacing up and down and stood before her in a perfect fever of admiration, anxiety and hope. Her hesitation and then her answer were so much more than he had expected.

The silence in the room became so intense that Miss Livingstone finally lifted her eyes to Tillottson’s face. What she saw there brought the blood to her own cheeks in a flame. She had not believed that there was so much love and affection left in humanity, such passionate adoration as he exhibited, and her heart throbbed exultantly in response to it.

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“My God!” at last exclaimed Tillottson, in a low, tense voice. “Miss Livingstone, you don’t mean it? You can’t really think about me in that way? I never dreamed—I only told you because it was the manly thing to do and you ought to know it. I never expected—I am beneath your feet.”

What was the man about to do? He sank down on his knees before her—it was horribly old-fashioned and very ridiculous, forgotten romances of an earlier age flashed through her mind, yet—he lifted the hem of her garment and kissed it like a knight of old.

“I am going now. Don’t say a word to me. I want to carry the memory of this away with me. I don’t want to spoil it by anything else. Perhaps, when you think it over you may not be able to—well, to accept me. I’ll learn that later. I don’t want to hear it now. Good-by. I’m coming to see you to-morrow morning, and I’m going to see your brother this afternoon.”

Miss Livingstone did not say anything. She did

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not even rise as he rose. She leaned forward in the chair and gave her hand to him. He took it in both his own; she trembled to feel how strong and firm was his grasp. Then he lifted it to his face, his white mustache brushed against it and he was gone.

Left to herself Miss Livingstone buried her face in her hands. Then she laughed, and then she cried, and then she dreamed. Her eyes fell upon the parchment that had been left on the desk. A look of amusement that was touched with pathos, aye, with affection, swept across her face.

“The credentials of my latest lover,” she murmured, gazing at it in puzzled abstraction.

CHAPTER III

MISS LIVINGSTONE HEARS THE VOICE OF SOCIETY

To Miss Livingstone, dawdling over a meal which was breakfast in point of priority, luncheon in point of time, entered Miss Gretchen De Kaater, a little later in the day. Miss De Kaater was a lady who had reached that point in life which is spoken of as "a certain age." That is to say, she was certainly old enough to make it more than probable she would remain Miss De Kaater until the end of the chapter.

She had been a devoted friend as well as a distant connection of Miss Livingstone's mother, and, so far as that imperious and self-willed young lady had allowed her, Miss De Kaater had endeavored to supply the departed mother's part. The friendship that existed between the two women was a warm and tender one such as often arises between the

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young and the old, and which is one of the compensations of life for the latter.

Indeed, Miss De Kaater was the object of general admiration in the set which she honored with her presence. Tall, distinguished, white-haired, highly cultivated, high principled, irreproachably bred, she was as narrow as a knife blade. She held herself aloof even from the modern adjuncts of the so-called four hundred, which she disdained. She prided herself upon her inordinately old and inordinately stubborn Dutch blood, and would have nothing to do with any one who could not boast of at least six generations of unadulterated Holland-American descent!

As she swept into the room it was evident that something was about to happen. Miss Livingstone usually welcomed her advent with joy, finding her opinions as pungent as they were pronounced, and her conversations therefore refreshing, although she sometimes took a malicious pleasure in controverting the elder woman's decided views. But, at this

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particular moment, in her painful state of indecision and uncertainty, she wished that her elderly mentor were anywhere but in her own breakfast-room.

There was a very imposing directness about Miss De Kaater. She plunged *in medias res* at once.

“Constance,” she asked, severely, with the air and manner of a grand inquisitor, “what is this I hear about this—er—cow-boy?”

It had come! Society, in the presence of its most honored and exalted representative, was already taking her in hand. Miss Livingstone affected to be above its influence. She had ceased to concern herself actively in society, and had thought society would reciprocate her lack of attention. But lo, and behold, she had been mistaken. Society never lets go of any one or forgets any one who breaks its conventions, however little it may concern itself about individuals who do nothing out of the common, or at least who do not get caught in so doing.

“What cow-boy, Aunt Gretchen? I know no

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cow-boys," replied the young woman, nerving herself for the conflict.

"Why, that little—er—Western man that the Jones-Todds picked up at the Waldorf a week ago. Awfully common people, those Jones-Todds. Nothing on earth to recommend them but money."

"Mrs. Jones-Todd," put in Constance, deftly, "was a Smithson, of Alabama. Mr. Jones-Todd is a graduate of Harvard. Mrs. Jones-Todd is a Vassar girl——"

"Oh, my dear Constance, as for mere learning, I grant you that anybody who has money can get an education. It makes them perhaps less objectionable, but, *au fond*, does not alter the case at all. However, I did not come here to discuss them. I saw Willie Vanderawe yesterday afternoon and, having heard something about the affair, I asked him plainly what he knew. He said that you had dined with him—with this, ah, person, I mean—at the Jones-Todds', on Monday. That you had ridden with him in the Park on Tuesday——"

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“There was a party.”

“Yes, yes, I know. You would never think of riding with him alone. That you had walked down the avenue with him on Wednesday——”

“I was going down to Phillippe’s to buy a Fall hat and just happened to meet him.”

“Of course. Such things always ‘just happen,’ I know,” continued the old lady, sagely. “That you had gone to the theatre with him and afterward to the—think of it—the Waldorf for supper——”

“Another party.”

“Certainly, another party, my dear Constance. Pray do not imagine that I think for an instant that you could so forget the dictates of society as to go alone with any one; but the party for him was plainly you. Now, that’s five times in one week, and I must say——”

“You haven’t heard it all, Aunt Gretchen,” said Constance, recklessly. “Mr. Vanderawe—to whom I am much obliged for his scrutiny of my movements—has neglected to tell that Mr. Tillottson——”

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“Is that his name?”

“It is. Elijah D.—”

“Elijah! What an impossible name!”

“It’s in the Bible, I believe.”

“Possibly, my dear, but not in society. Go on.”

“And Tillottson, I am told, is a good old New England name.”

“It may be. There are some very good old New England names borne by people who are ineffably common from our standpoint. But you were saying—”

“That Mr. Tillottson had called on me twice during the week beside.”

“Really, my dear child, you amaze me! What did he want?”

“The first time I think he principally regaled me with some of his Western and tropical experiences—and very interesting they were, too. The second time he asked me to be—his wife!”

The murder was out. Miss De Kaater took it badly. She sat bolt upright and speechless, her

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white curls quivering with appalled astonishment, which indignation strove to master.

“His—his—wife! Preposterous! Why, my dear Constance, what did you do?”

“I told him I would consider it, and I am—I shall, I mean!”

If Miss Gretchen De Kaater had been one of the fainting kind she never would have survived this second shock. All rigidity left her. She fell back, a limp, haggard, old figure, collapsing in the chair.

“Constance, Constance,” she murmured, faintly, “do I understand you aright?”

“I cannot say as to that, Aunt Gretchen, but——”

“You are—you are considering——?”

“Yes.”

“But, Constance, my dear Constance, you cannot accept——”

“Why not?”

“So in — inappropriate, my dear Constance. Think! We never heard of him. He is not of our set. He doesn’t even belong to the newcomers.

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Really, what has been said to me about him indicates that he is lacking in—er—refinement—in—education—in short, he is uncouth, ill-bred——”

“I’ll tell you what he is, Aunt Gretchen. He is a man through and through, if I ever saw one. He loves me with a genuine passion. Not for my money, or for my position, or for anything else but——”

“Love! Of course he would love you. But——”

“So I am considering it.”

“But you will reject him, my dear Constance! How could you hesitate about that for a moment?”

“I think it is more than likely, Aunt, that I shall reject him, but I shall give his suit very careful consideration first. The man appeals to me in many ways.”

“Oh, my dear girl, I pray, I implore, I beseech you—this is madness! You talk of love like a silly, sentimental school-girl. You forget that you are——”

“That I am thirty-five? I do not. I was reminded of it to-day.”

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“Reminded of it? By whom?”

“Mr. Tillottson.”

“How ineffably com——”

“It was not. It was refreshing. I was glad to hear it. He says he loves me for myself alone.”

“They all say that.”

“Yes. But this man means it.”

“Your fortune, my dear.”

“He doesn’t know anything about it. He has money enough to take care of me, he says. As for his lack of education——”

Here she lifted the parchment with a royal gesture and spread it out before the amazed old lady’s eyes.

“Here is his diploma,” she added with becoming gravity. Indeed she saw little to laugh at now.

“Did he come wooing you with that?” queried Miss De Kaater, in unconcealed scorn and contempt.

“He did. I assure you, Aunt Gretchen, it was a unique avowal in every respect. It quite took me off my guard.”

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“But, my dear Constance, now that you have had time to think it over quietly——”

“I am as undecided as ever. I do not know, but I think to accept him would be the best thing for me to do after all.”

“What does Bertie think about it?”

“I do not know what he thinks about it. Nor am I greatly concerned. He and I have been growing somewhat apart of late. As you have reminded me, I am of full age and must decide this thing myself. Besides, Bertie is going to marry Gertrude Van Stuyler.”

“I know.”

“When they are married I shall have to seek other quarters.”

“My home,” interrupted the old lady, eagerly; “my dear Constance, it is always at your service. I shall be only too glad, too happy, to welcome you there, my dear child.”

“Thank you, dear aunt,” said Miss Livingstone, with a shudder of horror at the gloomy magnificence

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of the De Kaater mansion on Washington Square, which almost made her resolve to accept Mr. Tillotson at once. "I really like the man," she continued. "I respect him. I admire him."

It was difficult to know whether she was trying to persuade Miss De Kaater or herself. At any rate, she proceeded boldly.

"As I told you, he is the manliest man I have ever met."

"Yes?" doubtfully, and in great distress. "You seem to have made extraordinary progress in learning his history and in discovering his characteristics in a very brief acquaintance."

"I have. I do not know all that he has done, but what I do know I admire, and these qualities I speak of are those that manifest themselves to me. So far from being annoyed, I am honored by his proposal. And I am carefully considering it."

"You don't love him?"

"Certainly not. But, then, I do not love any

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one. That is, I do not love any man. I doubt if I ever shall. He is fifty years old.”

“ Fifty years old? My dear——”

“ Beg pardon, miss,” interrupted the English butler, tapping at the door, and then opening it. “ Miss Van Stuyler is in the drawing-room, and would like to see you.”

“ Ask her to come in here, Williams.”

“ Constance, will you allow me to speak of this—this person, to Gertrude? She is a friend of yours. She is of your own set. Perhaps she——”

“ Certainly, tell her if you wish,” answered Miss Livingstone. “ Although I do not care, in justice to Mr. Tillottson, to have it generally known, but Gertrude is practically one of the family, or she soon will be.”

“ Gertrude Van Stuyler, have you——” burst out the old lady, impetuously, as that young woman entered the room, “ have you heard of this horrible—er—insolence of a Mr. Tillottson?”

“ Insolence? No, Miss De Kaater. Good morn-

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ing, Connie, dear. What insolence do you refer to?"

"Why, he says he is in love with Constance here."

"I was sure of it," answered Miss Van Stuyler, with an irrepressible little laugh. "Really, he is the most amusing man I ever came across. Fancy, he told me that he actually enjoyed riding down Fifth Avenue on the top of one of those stages!"

"Impossible!"

"He said so and I'm sure he is capable of it. Why, he even went 'Seeing New York' on that tally-ho thing."

Miss De Kaater shuddered.

"That's nothing," continued the frivolous Miss Van Stuyler, quite intoxicated by her success in shocking poor Miss De Kaater. "He took us to the theatre the other night——"

"Were you of that party?" queried the scandalized old lady, lifting her lorgnette.

"Yes, Miss De Kaater. My aunt, Mrs. Carberry Hills, chaperoned us. I'll tell you all about it."

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Now Miss Livingstone immediately realized that Gertrude Van Stuyler was about to hold Mr. Tillotson up to ridicule. A word or two would have put her in possession of the facts, and have checked her, but Miss Livingstone deliberately determined to subject herself to the test of hearing the man who loved her pictured to her in an absurd and exaggerated light. She thought her emotions under such circumstances might be useful in assisting her to arrive at the promised decision, so she kept discreetly silent, only proffering Miss Van Stuyler a cup of tea while she rattled on.

“Was he—ah—dressed properly?” queried Miss De Kaater.

“Oh, quite unexceptionably. Some one recommended him to Brookpool; he’s the best English tailor in the city, you know, and he saw to it that he was all right. He’s always beautifully dressed when I’ve seen him. Come to think of it, he did have a black tie on with his full dress suit. The man looks well, Miss De Kaater. Indeed, I think he is very

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handsome—distinguished—really—you know. Quite like a gentleman, in fact.”

“Won’t you have another cup of tea, Gertrude, dear, or more sugar?” broke in Constance, with spontaneous gratitude.

“No more, thank you, dear. It is what he says and does that are so funny. He sat right back of Constance and myself, in the proscenium box, at the Empire. He said he had been to the theatre in Chicago, but never in New York, and, when we asked him about that time, he explained that it was at the Auditorium some years ago on a grand opera night.”

“‘I didn’t have a rig like this, either,’ he remarked, with perfect frankness. ‘I had no boiled shirt—’”

“Boiled shirt?” gasped Miss De Kaater, startled and horrified, for the girl’s mimicry of Tillotson’s voice and manner was as good as her memory for his words.

“That’s what he called it.”

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“Go on.”

“He said he wore a ‘calico shirt,’ and he was the only man in the house that did, and he felt as comfortable as could be, a lot more comfortable, in fact, than he was last night.”

“But in Chicago,” murmured Miss De Kaater, in plaintive disdain, “they do those things, I’ve heard.”

“Yes, of course, you can do anything in Chicago, they say. Then, after supper, he told us he had been informed by his social mentor, whoever that person is——”

“I told him myself,” interrupted Constance, forcing herself to speak calmly, in spite of the fact that she was growing very angry indeed, the experiment not being particularly happy, so far. “He asked me the night before.”

“Oh, it was you, was it? Well, he said he had been informed that it was the correct thing to take a theatre-party to supper somewhere after the performance, so we drove over to the Waldorf. We

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thought it would be safer than at Sherry's, you know. He had a table engaged all right, but when it came to the ordering—Why didn't you post him up on that, Constance?"

"He didn't ask me."

"Well, he asked me that night, and I suggested oysters, salad or lobster à la Newburgh, and—er—champagne. 'Nonsense!' he replied, promptly, 'it's about midnight. We haven't had anything to eat for six hours. Solid food is what we want. If you're as hungry as I am, you'll welcome something more substantial. Here, waiter, bring us six orders of beefsteak and fried potatoes. And champagne for the ladies. As for me, I'll take a little whiskey straight with mine.'"

"At the Waldorf?" murmured Miss De Kaater faintly.

"The very place, and it was filled with people, too, although none of them knew us, of course. They were not of our set."

"What did you do?"

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“We ate the beefsteak. Enormous lot of it, too, as you can well imagine. Six huge orders, and a separate waiter to each plate—very imposing! We drank the champagne, while he had his whiskey straight. It was all very good, too. I never realized I was so hungry. Did you ever try beefsteak and fried potatoes at midnight, Miss De Kaater?”

“Never! Does he eat with—er—his knife?”

“Oh, no, he eats all right. He isn’t so very bad, personally, you know, but the whole affair was too funny to describe even, and so exciting! Everybody in the room was so interested in us.”

“I should think so!” exclaimed Miss De Kaater, with ineffable contempt speaking in every line of her face and figure, while the girl threw back her head and laughed and laughed.

Miss Van Stuyler’s recital had brought the angry color to Miss Livingstone’s face, while it had driven the last vestige of color remaining from Miss De Kaater’s withered cheek.

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“That was last night,” broke in Miss Livingstone, swiftly. “This morning he asked me to be his wife.”

The effect of this announcement was quite as startling to Miss Van Stuyler as it had been to the elder woman. Her laughter ceased instantly. She sat bolt upright in her chair in astonishment.

“What!” she cried, shrilly, “asked you to marry him! Incredible! You refused him at once, of course. The preposterous little fool! This is what comes of encouraging——”

“She is considering it,” wailed Miss De Kaater.

“Constance Van Benthuysen Livingstone, you don’t mean it?”

“I do.”

“After all these things?”

“After all these things, and they are all true, Aunt Gretchen. But there are other things about the man which are only fair to tell. You were in the riding-party on Tuesday. They thought to play a trick on him. Bertie and Mr. Willie Vanderawe

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and that young Smith-Pogis picked out the most vicious horse they could find in the stable. You saw how he mastered it, Gertrude."

"Yes, with a cow-boy saddle which he insisted on having put on the horse, and such a way to ride!"

"I like the way he sat his horse. When you think of it, this up-and-down motion on a trotting horse is very absurd; he said it was a fool's way to ride, and nobody who had to spend a day on a—a—bronco's back, I think he called it, would ever try it."

"Fancy!"

"Yes, I do fancy it. And how tractable that brute became under his hand! And when my own horse bolted it was he who overtook me and stopped the mare, which was very unmanageable that day. It was he who did it, while the rest of the men stupidly looked on. You have read about the Trans-Andean Railroad? He engineered and built it. He's a great engineer. He can do anything that a man can do, and do it better than most people. In those little things upon which society lays so much

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emphasis—and justly, too, perhaps—he has much to learn; but there are many things we can all learn from him.”

“Why, my dear Constance, should you think of marriage? You are not in love with him?”

“No; although I admire him. If you could have seen him to-day! A man always appears at a disadvantage when he is asking a woman to marry him. That’s my experience, anyway. But this morning——”

“What! That little——!”

“Hush, Gertrude! Whatever he is I respect him, and you must not speak of him in that way. I allowed you to run on, as you have, in order that the worst might be told to Aunt Gretchen.”

“But why should you marry at all?”

“When you and Bertie are married I shall be *de trop*.”

“No, never! You shall live with us as long as you wish.”

“That is very kind of you, Gertrude, but I should

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not wish to live with you. It is not right that I should."

"But what will society—your friends——?"

"My friends will agree with me if I decide to accept him, and, as for society, I really care little about it."

"She cares nothing for society," said Miss De Kaater, in a hopeless tone, looking at no one while she spoke, as if she were appealing to the immortal gods alone.

"I assure you, my dear Gertrude, you do not really know the man at all. He struck me at first as oddly as he struck you, but as I know him better my opinions change. Now, I am doing him the honor to consider his suit as I should that of any other honorable man."

"Constance, will you have your man ring for my carriage? This has been too much for me. I must go home," said Miss De Kaater, in feeble resignation.

CHAPTER IV

MR. TILLOTTSO~~N~~ REFUSES TO RECEIVE HIS ANSWER

“What! Aunt Gretchen going home just as I come in?” exclaimed Mr. Bertie Livingstone, breezily, as he entered the room. “I’m glad to find you here, and you, too, dear.” He went over to the girl and kissed her tenderly.

“Now, Constance”—thrusting his hand in his bosom and assuming a most magisterial and authoritative air, for all that he was her junior—“what’s all this rot I hear about you and that wild-Western, semi-tropic freak that the Jones-Todds unloaded on us?”

“Are you referring to Mr. Elijah D. Tillottson?”—this with a freezing dignity that should have warned him.

“Is that his name? Elijah! Well, the little puppy had the insolence to come down to my office

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this morning and tell me that, recognizing me as the only masculine member of the family, he thought it only honorable to inform me that he had asked you to be his wife. Ha! ha!"

"What did you do, Bertie, dear?" asked Miss De Kaater, anxiously.

"I expressed my mind rather freely and forcibly, I flatter myself. I told him, among other things, that Constance was very rich. That she was mistress in her own right of a vast fortune. That I knew he was a mere fortune-hunter. That he was a common, low-bred parvenu, probably after her for her money. That if he ever entered my office again, or this house, I should have him kicked out by the servants."

"What did he do then?" asked Gertrude.

"He fumbled in his back pocket, where he keeps his handkerchief, I suppose. Possibly he wanted to blow his nose to hide his embarrassment."

Mr. Bertie Livingstone did not realize how near instant death he had been at that interesting mo-

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ment, for Mr. Elijah D. Tillottson had not been reaching for his handkerchief nor had he been thinking of blowing his nose, either.

“Then he bowed in quite a magnificent way,” continued Bertie. “He said, ‘You are her brother, sir,’ and walked out of the place as stately as you please. Did he really presume to speak to you, Constance?”

“He did.”

“What did you say?”

“I said I would consider his suit.”

“Great God! Excuse me, ladies, but——”

“And I have considered it.”

“You will——?”

“I shall accept him to-morrow.”

She arose as she spoke, and swept out of the room, leaving the three a prey to the most petrifying consternation.

At eleven the next morning Mr. Elijah D. Tillottson called again on Miss Livingstone, and this time she was up and waiting for him. She had been awake the greater part of the night and up since the

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early morning. She had fought a long battle with her relations and herself, and her mind was made up.

Mr. Tillottson came into the library with his hand on his hip pocket again. He heaved a sigh of relief when he got there, too.

“I didn’t know but that I’d have to shoot some one before I could get to see you, Miss Livingstone,” he remarked coolly, “after what your brother said yesterday about having me kicked out. I was determined to see you, and I’d cheerfully have killed half-a-dozen flunkies if they had tried to stop me.”

“Mr. Tillottson, I wish to apologize to you for my brother’s outrageous behavior.”

“Did he tell you to do it?”

“No. I am doing it on my own account.”

“Well, don’t you get yourself mixed up in this affair. If there is an apology to come, let it come from him. That’s all right. I’ll settle with him some day. Now, Miss Livingstone, let’s put aside this disagreeable subject,” he went on, with uncon-

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scious frankness. "I told you I would come this morning for an answer. I'm not coming—that is, I don't want an answer, yet."

"What, sir?" cried the woman, amazed. "You haven't repented? You don't wish——?"

She was startled beyond her self-control by his remarks.

"I want you more profoundly than ever. I love you more than I did yesterday. It's had twenty-four hours to grow in, you see. I told you I was possessed of a fortune—enough to keep you in comfort if you'd be my wife—but I have my own pride, Miss Livingstone. I won't have it cast up to me that I am a fortune-hunter. Until I can match your fortune with my own, I'll not ask you again to be my wife—how much are you worth, anyway?"

"I hardly know. About ten million dollars, I think."

She was so startled that she answered his questions mechanically, as if the conversation were the most natural one in the world.

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“Is it invested in your brother’s business?”

“No. It was, but I have taken it out.”

“That’s all I wanted to know. The day I can bring you ten million dollars in my hand I shall ask you again to be my wife. Until that time I shall not bother you again in any way.”

“That is a very large sum, Mr. Tillottson. I’m afraid you will never—it will take a long time to—” said the woman, faintly, blushing furiously as she did so.

“Yes, it is. But I’ll make it, and quick, too, if you’ll only wait. I have some money as a nest egg, and I’ve got a plan. Now, I won’t see you, or speak to you, or trouble you again in any way for two months at least. I think that will give me plenty of time for everything. That’s why I shall not ask you for an answer to that question now.”

The little man had grown strangely in dignity and force during the night, thought the woman as she listened intently to him.

“I’ve got the memory of yesterday morning with

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you to blot out all the other unpleasantness, Miss Livingstone," he continued, "and I believe that you will wait for me two months. That is, say, until the first of January. It will give you a little more time for consideration, and me a few days more in which to get that ten million. I can be brushing up my education, meanwhile, too. I can be learning something about the ways of your people, so that I can be fitter to ask you that question."

"I shall wait, Mr. Tillottson."

"Would it be stretching the bargain if I asked you to wish me good luck? It need not commit you to anything, you know."

"I wish you good luck with all my heart," said the woman, rising and giving him both her hands. "You didn't ask me the question you came to ask, so I will not answer it, but—I had decided——"

She flashed a glance at him that sent the blood leaping in his veins.

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“God bless you, Miss Livingstone!” he cried, exultantly, grasping her hands. “I’ll ask you that question on the first day of the new year. Good-bye.”

CHAPTER V

MISS LIVINGSTONE RECEIVES TWO OTHER PROPOSALS

Miss Livingstone had gone through various phases of indecision since her ears had first been greeted by the amazing proposition of Mr. Elijah D. Tillottson.

If she had been handled more judiciously by her friends it is quite possible that the transient emotions which had been evoked by his unique proposal and unusual personality would have been dissipated in the sober light of reflection, and on his next visit her remarkable wooer would have been gently but firmly dismissed. But the exceedingly injudicious and somewhat foolish attack of Miss De Kaater, and the flippant, shallow mockery of Miss Van Stuyler, had given her pause.

When to these her brother's brutal treatment had been added she resolved to accept him at once. A night's reflection, however, had somewhat im-

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paired the soundness of that conclusion, and before she saw her lover in the morning she had once more fallen into a state of uncertainty.

She had made this much progress, however, that whatever she had determined upon she had not determined to reject him. She was temporizing in her own mind. Tillottson's own sudden decision not to ask for an answer to his proposal had added a new phase to the situation. To her great surprise he had not pressed his request, and when he did not her thoughts turned to the deciding point again—and she had been his for the asking!

Without at all intending to be clever Tillottson had been brilliantly tactful in his manipulation of the situation, for when she found she was not asked to decide she immediately did so. She was not too old, or too experienced, to be essentially a woman, and Tillottson's refusal to press his suit, and the reasons he gave, had been overwhelmingly in his favor.

Really she found the man delightful. There was a freshness and innocence about him in spite of his

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worldly wisdom—an innocence of conventionality, that is—thought the woman, who was satiated with and bored by overmuch conventionality, that was most refreshing. In her large experience an ordinary wooer could be counted upon to do certain things in a certain way as unerringly as a proposition in mathematics might be demonstrated. Tillottson was plainly not of that sort.

The magnificent assurance with which he had announced his intention of making ten million dollars in two months was startling in itself. She did not know how much he had to begin with, probably a hundred thousand dollars, she guessed, perhaps a trifle more. But he seemed entirely confident of success. Perhaps because he did not realize how stupendous was the proposition he had set before himself. With a wider knowledge than his of modern business conditions in New York she was thoroughly skeptical, and yet she caught herself hoping that it might be so. Not that there was any need for him to do so since she had enough for—her thoughts

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actually surprised her. Could it be that she was in love?

No, certainly not, she was not in love with Tillotson, as she had experienced love in the past—so at least she strove to persuade herself—but she certainly liked him very much, she admitted, and that liking was a growing one, and might be sufficiently strong in the end to enable her to marry him. Where could she find a gentler, a truer man than he, or a man more devotedly attached to her, for herself alone?

There was something attractive about the idea of marrying him, too. She had always been a daring young woman, and she thought she would enjoy the social uplifting of hands, the social wagging of tongues that would ensue if the opinion held by Miss De Kaater and Gertrude Van Stuyler was any criterion, when she announced her decision to marry him. How shocked every one would be!

So, on mature reflection, although she vowed she did not love him, and could never be brought to ad-

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mit that she did, or could, privately she was beginning. She compromised with her conscience at last by mentally agreeing to leave the determination of the affair to the enterprise upon which Tillottson was engaged. As he succeeded or failed she would decide. Meanwhile she would endeavor to think no more about him, dismiss him from her mind during the intervening two months.

That resolution was easier made than kept, and when the next morning brought her a magnificent box of American Beauty roses, without card or other indication of the sender, she instantly divined that they were from him. He had made that much progress in her affection, for she referred to him mentally and exclusively by that personal pronoun—a good omen for Mr. Elijah D. Tillottson.

That afternoon—the next after Tillottson's refusal to ask for her answer—she had two callers. The first was Mr. Cunningham Cutter. Mr. Cunningham Cutter had been the recipient of a confidence which had stirred him profoundly. Al-

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though he was not ready, at least the time had not arrived in his elaborate plan of campaign, to make his proposal to Miss Livingstone, yet what he had learned rendered it imperative that he should no longer delay. In plain words, he came to ask her to be his wife.

Mr. Cunningham Cutter was too much of a business man to be romantic, and was too calm and self-possessed not to cover up most of his emotion, yet genuine feeling thrilled in his voice as he asked the fateful question. Under other circumstances, although she admired him greatly, Miss Livingstone would have kindly but definitely rejected him. But now she was in a curious state of uncertainty and indecision.

Mr. Cutter was a handsome, distinguished-looking man, well bred, keen, forceful, able. Qualities that she greatly admired shone in his face. Qualities she did not admire were carefully concealed.

Who can account for the vagaries of the feminine heart, especially when it has survived in isolation,

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in spite of persistent attacks, for thirty-five long, if glorious and triumphant, Summers ? Miss Living-stone temporized again, why, she scarcely knew. Perhaps to prove to herself that her heart did not bind her to Mr. Elijah D. Tillottson !

She told Mr. Cutter that she did not love him. She further stated that she had under consideration—it was singular how she accommodated her language to his business-like methods—another proposition of similar character to his own, a decision on which she had promised to defer until the first of January next. Therefore, even if she were so inclined, she could not reply definitely to Mr. Cutter's suit until that time, unless he were willing to take a present negative decision.

Mr. Cutter ventured to inquire as to the state of her feelings with regard to this other proposition, some details of which he had learned elsewhere, although that was a fact he did not allude to, and was frankly told that she was undecided. She was also frank enough to tell him that it was highly improb-

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able that he would receive a favorable decision in any case.

Choosing not to construe this as a flat refusal, Mr. Cutter promised himself, and finally advised her, that he would also come for her answer on the first of the year himself. Miss Livingstone immediately promised that he should have it then. Mr. Cutter's choice of flowers was violets. To the American Beauties, therefore, which came daily, was added a gorgeous heap of Parma violets every morning.

Later in the same afternoon the Honorable Reginald Kentigern Killigrew, etc., also made his appearance. His presence was the result of a deep conspiracy between Miss De Kaater, Miss Van Stuyler and Bertie Livingstone.

A fortuitous cablegram, received that morning from England, gave him another long-desired opportunity to present himself anew at the shrine of his divinity. Once again, his ardor and passion overcoming his usual stammering timidity, he began in those broken accents, with those disjointed phrases

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with which very youthful English lovers lamely express themselves until they are old enough to acquire the habit of talking freely and flippantly, after the manner of the United States!

The cablegram was from his father. It told of an official notification from the Prime Minister of his Gracious Majesty the King, that for great political services rendered—said services having been commuted into hard cash, by the way—his well-beloved Baron Revelstone was to be gazetted an Earl at the first convenient opportunity, and that the Honorable Reginald Kentigern, etc., would thereby become a Lord.

“Now, you’re a ripping girl, ye know, and I like you awfully well, really I do,” he drawled after he had communicated to her this, to him astounding news. “Of course, you are above this sort of thing, but most Americans seem to think it is—rather a jolly thing to be a Lord—or a Lady, I mean—and—er—that sort of thing, don’t you know, and I—I—want you awfully—’pon honor I do. I’ll settle on

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you everything the old man gives me and he's awfully liberal, too; and he'll cut up fine some day, I'm sure, 'pon my word, although I hope he'll not be in a hurry about that."

"I am old enough to be your mother, I'll adopt you if you like," said Miss Livingstone, calmly.

"Oh, come now, really, you know," staring at her through his monocle with a deprecating grin.

"And in America we do not marry men for what their fathers are or do."

"Some girls do, you know."

"Of course, but I do not."

"Would you marry me if I were to do—er—something—er—ripping, don't you know?"

"I do not know. I think not."

"But would my chances be better if I did?"

"They could not be worse, so they might be better in one sense."

"What is there for me to do?"

"Well, that is for you to find out. There are no dragons to slay that I can suggest, and—"

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“Oh, now, really you are joking——”

“I will give you one hint, however. There was a man the other day who proposed to make a great deal of money, and, when he made it, he was going to ask me to be his wife.”

“Beg pardon, Miss Livingstone, but did you agree——?”

“I gave him two months to make the money—more because he insisted on it himself than on account of the money, you understand—and then I promised to give him a decision. I did not bind myself to anything.”

“By Jove, I’ll do it myself. How much is he going to make?”

“I think he said ten million dollars.”

“What! That’s two million pounds!”

The man was so startled that for the first time since she had known him his monocle fell from his eye. It was an interesting moment, indeed.

“It is,” she answered, smiling at his discomfiture.

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“If I could make that in two months would you marry me?”

Miss Livingstone laughed. The absurdity of the question was too great, even for her courtesy.

“I should certainly be more inclined to consider you than I am now, but I should not bind myself to anything. I think it is very unlikely.”

“I never made any money before, but people do make lots of money in the Stock Exchange, they say, don’t you know. It’s real easy, I’m told, if you know the game. I’m going to try it.”

“My advice to you, Mr. Smith-Pogis, is one word —don’t!”

“But, Miss Livingstone, it’s the only way to impress you, and, by Jove, I’ll do it!”

“You understand freely, of course, that I’m not bound to anything?”

“Oh, quite!”

“Well, on those conditions, come to me two months from to-day and I will give you your answer.”

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The Honorable Reginald, etc., elected carnations for his flower, and a daily boxful took its place beside the roses and violets. If Miss Livingstone had many more suitors to drop down upon her, she would have to enlarge her house or turn it into a conservatory.

There was something of the sportswoman about Miss Livingstone, and she found no little excitement in the situation. She did not regard herself as being auctioned off among her suitors. She did not consider that she was being bought, for she had been explicit in her declaration that she reserved for herself full liberty of choice at the time she had appointed for the decision, whatever her three lovers succeeded or failed in doing. She did not realize that she had already made up her mind, that she was no longer a free agent, but such were the facts.

No sum had been set for Mr. Cutter to achieve. As for the Honorable Reginald, etc., he could be dismissed from the running. There was nothing he could do by which he could legitimately earn ten

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cents. As for Tillottson, he had taken the matter in his own hands, and set his own pace.

There was another thing, since Tillottson voluntarily withdrew himself from her society for the intervening two months, she considered it only fair that the others should do likewise, so notes in her elegant handwriting were sped to her last two suitors requesting that they should not trouble her with wooing, or other matters, until the first of January.

It was easy to keep track of Smith-Pogis through the newspapers, for they were filled with his doings, and sometimes she met him in society. Society had no longer any charms for him except as it permitted him to see her. He spent the evening at functions where she was present, plastered against the wall, eying her through his monocle; and when she left he left. A most uninteresting specimen he was voted by matchmaking mammas and marriageable daughters with inclinations toward the British aristocracy.

He neither spoke to her, nor wrote to her, nor troubled her in any way, save by looking at her

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whenever and wherever he could. There was good blood in the Honorable Reginald, she recognized, and it told in the end.

Mr. Cutter also had few opportunities of gazing from afar at his divinity, for he was intensely busy, and found little time to devote to social functions. Nor was his entrée comparable to that of his English rival. Yet Miss Livingstone heard of him also at infrequent intervals; as often as she wished, that is.

Her remaining suitor, Mr. Elijah D. Tillottson, seemed to have dropped completely out of her existence. He gave up his apartments at the Waldorf and nobody knew where he had gone. His mail was directed to the banking house of Merrill & Frost, corner of Nassau and Liberty streets. The daily consignment of flowers—and how reluctant she became to throw away even the withered ones!—proved that he was still on the earth and still thought of her, but that was all she knew of him.

As for her, she thought of him more and more. If she had been a girl in her teens she could not have

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done worse, she told herself, with a valiant assumption of self-contempt. The other two men she dismissed from her mind.

So she passed through two months of the hardest waiting that ever fell to the lot of any woman. It was relieved toward the latter part of the probationary period by a series of happenings as unexpected and startling as they were dramatic and interesting.

CHAPTER VI

THE GREAT DEAL IS ON

To increase a capital of five million dollars to ten million dollars in the space of two months requires a singular combination of ability and opportunity. Usually it can only be done on the Stock Exchange.

And that was where this unconventional but ardent lover proposed to accomplish his self-imposed task.

Fortunately for Tillottson, when he left Brazil he had converted his extensive property into gilt-edge securities, easily negotiable, upon which he could realize at once. There was no difficulty as to his command of his capital, therefore. When he had confidently announced to the woman he loved that he intended to present himself to her in two months for an answer to his question with ten million dollars to match her own it had been no wild, unfounded

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boast. The boaster in the lands where Tillottson had lived and made his fortune speedily comes to grief. He had a well-defined plan of action.

The enterprise he was about to inaugurate was not a new idea to him, for he had considered it carefully before he ever returned to the United States, and had only decided not to undertake it because there was no real reason, after all, why he should want more money than he already had. He was, in a measure, prepared for it, therefore. It was not the offspring of a sudden impulse, the decision of an exigent moment.

In brief, he proposed to corner the coffee market in December. Under ordinary circumstances, such is the enormous production of coffee, and such is the magnitude of the visible supply in the United States and the world, that a corner in coffee is a practical impossibility, yet fortune had so favored the would-be speculator that if ever conditions were favorable for a corner in coffee they would be in that December.

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Now, the bulk of the coffee—something like ninety per cent.—that is consumed in the United States, or in the world even, happens to come from Brazil. The greater portion of the remaining ten per cent. comes from Mexico and other South American countries. The amount of Java and Mocha, like that really included in the ordinary mixture sold under those high-sounding names, is a negligible quantity. There had been a crop failure in Brazil for two years in succession, and the present crop was the shortest that had been harvested for years. Prior to these natural shortages, economic disturbances and political upheavals from which the Brazilian Republic was still suffering had conduced to produce a third yearly deficiency in the coffee crop.

Coffee was scarce and was already selling for fifteen cents per pound on the Exchange. This was a very unusual price indeed. In addition to the fact that there was a short crop the Brazilian dealers were holding off shipments for higher prices. The visible supply had steadily decreased to a smaller amount

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than it had reached for fifty years. It is roughly estimated that every man, woman and child in the United States now consumes about twenty pounds of coffee in a year, and the ratio of consumption is steadily growing. Yet there was no such thing as a coffee famine. There were still reserve stocks in the United States and further stocks in Europe which could be drawn upon.

Whether it would be possible to control the coffee market was a question. Tillottson thought it would be. At any rate he was entirely willing to stake his entire fortune on his ability to control it. Besides, in this instance, he had to do it. Like every soldier of fortune—and your modern American engineer, who goes all over the world mastering its physical difficulties, is the modern successor of the representatives of that ancient guild—Tillottson was a born speculator. But there was more in it than mere speculation for him. It wasn't simply the increment of his fortune for which he fought, but the hand of the woman he loved. He determined to

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succeed, and he was confident that he would, for a reason which was yet unknown to the world.

Tillottson's relations with the present authorities in Brazil were very close and personal. He had reason to believe, from what he had learned, that before the close of the year a final effort would be made to collect certain long-standing and rapidly increasing claims from Brazilian debtors due to English, German and Spanish creditors. His knowledge of inside affairs in Brazil enabled him to make a shrewd guess that the payment of these debts would be refused by the Government, and that England, Germany and Spain would endeavor to collect them by force. This would tend to render the shortage of coffee greater than it already was. There were many contingencies which seemed certain to arise under these circumstances, and Tillottson determined to take advantage of them.

There was another reason why he wanted to corner the coffee market, too, and that was because he thought in so doing he could squeeze the life out

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of Bertie Livingstone! Tillottson cherished a very bitter feeling toward that young man. He hadn't shot him, as he would have any other man, under such circumstances, when he had been grossly insulted—he could not shoot "her" brother—but he did not hesitate to declare, in his mind, that he would get even with him if he could; and he thought that he could in this coffee deal, in which he felt certain that Bertie would soon be involved on the bear side, on account of his business connections.

The principal coffee brokers in the United States, Tillottson had learned from his correspondents in Brazil, were Cutter, Drewitt & Co. To them, therefore, he repaired the day he left Miss Livingstone. Mr. Cutter had heard of him, and when he was announced he had him ushered immediately into the private office. Mr. Cutter's interest in him was not only professional but personal. As a possible rival he was glad to make his acquaintance and **have a chance to size him up.**

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“My name is Tillottson,” began the engineer.

“I am glad to meet you, Mr. Tillottson. Sit down, sir.”

“Thank you. You will regard what I have to say as strictly confidential?”

“Certainly, sir. It is a rule of the business.”

“Quite so. I have heard of you as the largest coffee broker in the United States.”

“You honor me, my dear sir.”

“The fact honors you. I want to know if you are at liberty to undertake a deal with me.”

“What sort of a deal, Mr. Tillottson?”

“I intend to corner the coffee market of the United States.”

“That is a very extensive proposition, sir. So far as I am aware, no one has ever succeeded in doing that.”

“I shall. I have inside information which makes me believe I can do it. At any rate I think it’s good enough to risk it.”

“You are the best judge as to that, Mr. Tillott-

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son," answered the broker, coolly enough, although the magnitude of the proposition startled him.

What could that information be? he wondered. No one ever took Tillottson for a fool, and yet—however the engineer's reasons were nothing to Cutter. As a broker his course was plain enough.

"Of course, I am the judge of my own information," continued Tillottson, a little impatiently. "That's all right, but the only trouble with me is that I don't know anything about the rules of the game. The general principles I understand, though. I've got to play it, I've been told, through somebody as has a license to deal. I've pitched on you. Do you want to undertake the job?"

"I shall be happy to execute any commissions you may entrust to me," replied the other, cautiously.

"Well, that is what I want you to do. I've heard that brokers sometimes mix up in this sort of thing on their own account."

"True. Quite true."

"I don't want you to get into this. It's my deal,

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and I want to carry it all. If you mix in it it's your own risk. I warn you to keep out of it."

"I quite understand that, Mr. Tillottson. Now, what do you propose to do?"

"I want to buy all the coffee that is offered for December delivery."

"The price of coffee is already high."

"Yes."

"And it will go higher."

"Certain to."

"The crop is short."

"I know that."

"But, on the other hand, there is a considerable visible supply that must be reckoned with both here and in Europe, and the shipments from Brazil have been few of late, so that, in spite of the short crop, they must have an immense stock down there."

"They have. They're holding it for a higher price, I happen to know."

"I presume so. As soon as we commence buying the price will rise, you understand."

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“Naturally.”

“And the Brazilian supply will be rushed into the ships and headed for New York.”

“I’m not so sure about that.”

“My dear sir, it is inevitable that it should.”

“Mr. Cutter, suppose I am in possession of information that leads me to believe the Brazilian planters and speculators won’t be able to ship their coffee when they want to? Seeing the price go up they’ll continue to hold for a still higher one—until too late. Shipments will be prevented.”

“What!” cried Cutter, in great surprise; then, recovering himself, he continued: “If such a thing were possible, that would greatly relieve the situation from our point of view. But, of course, there would be the European stocks to be dealt with.”

“I know that. A large proportion of them will probably come over here. But the visible supply ain’t none too great—” Mr. Cutter shuddered at the ungrammatical language—“and, well, sir, we’ll have to take care of it somehow or other,” added the

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engineer, who did not care to lay all his cards on the table in the first deal.

“Very well,” said the broker, drawing a memorandum pad to him.

“Then you will undertake the deal through me?”

“I will, provided you—we may as well be frank with one another, Mr. Tillottson. May I ask what capital you have available at present to begin operations?”

For answer Tillottson laid his bank-book down on the table in front of Cutter.

“There’s five million to my credit in hard cash in Merrill & Frost’s bank,” he said. “They’ll act as my bankers in the deal.”

“That’s a magnificent sum to begin with,” said the broker, his opinion of Tillottson going up by leaps and bounds, “but we shall need more than that before we get through.”

“I can get more.”

“Excuse me. How much?”

“As much again. I’ve got a partner down in

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Brazil. Him and me split even when we parted, six months ago, and if he ain't lost his pile I guess it's at my service."

"Well, you'd better make sure of that."

"I have. I wired him last night to come up here with all his stuff. I told him I had a big deal on hand. I took the liberty of directing him to reply to your office."

Just then there was a knock on the door, and a telegram was handed in.

"It is for you, Mr. Tillottson," said Cutter, after glancing at the envelope.

"We'll see what he's going to do," said the latter, tearing it open. "Just as I thought. He'll be here on the first steamer and bring his wad with him."

"Beg pardon, his 'wad'?"

"Yes, his dough, his ducats, all he's got, you know."

"I see. But are you sure he would care to embark in a deal of this kind?"

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“Dead certain. I’d do the same for him. And when he knows I’m doing it for a woman——”

“For a woman?”

“Yes. I didn’t mean to let that out, but, now the mischief’s done, you might as well know. I have proposed marriage to a young lady with a fortune of some ten millions.”

“How did you know that, may I ask?”

“She told me so herself. I asked her to be my wife, but before she gave me her decision her brother accused me of being a fortune-hunter, and I said I was going to make a fortune to match her own before I came to see her again. I have two months to do it in, and I’m going to do it.”

“I see,” said Mr. Cutter, gravely, instantly divining from what he had heard of Mr. Tillottson’s movements during the past week who the lady was. Very little that touched Miss Livingstone of late had escaped Mr. Cutter’s keen scrutiny.

“So, when I tell Johnstone—he’s my partner, Colonel Pinckney Tolliver Johnstone, sir—about

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this deal, he'll be in it right away. Johnstone is the greatest poker player in the world. He's got nerve enough to stand in a game with every dollar he has on earth, without holding a pair in his hand, just for the fun of the game. And he'd do anything for an old partner like me. You don't know the kind of men they breed outside of Wall Street, I take it—meaning no disrespect to you and your friends, of course."

"Well, that will increase your capital to about ten million dollars," said Cutter, smoothly evading the question and sticking to the main fact of this interesting conversation. "I think we may be able to do with that, provided those Brazilian stocks don't turn up. If they do, you will fail."

"Yes, that's the risk; I'll have to take it."

"Very well, as I said before, you know best about that."

"I do. Ain't there some way of turning over our capital and make it do more work than ten millions?"

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“Of course. For instance, as fast as any coffee is delivered to us we can do several things with it. We can sell judiciously at the higher prices, some of it we can turn into small dealers’ hands; and for what we have to take and keep we can turn over the warehouse receipts to the bank and borrow money on them.”

“I thought so. I’ve made some study about this thing. There’s been a bully book written about it, ‘Wall Street, and How They Work ’em There,’ you know. I bought a copy last night, and read it through. When do we begin the campaign?”

“The sooner the better. Of course, you do not wish to appear in the deal?”

“Don’t breathe a word about it to anybody that I am backing you, not on your life, man! I’ve engaged a room up on Broadway here, and had a telephone put in, under the name of X. P. Smith. You can communicate with me that way. I’m going to be dead to the world for two months. I want you

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to engineer this deal. I'll keep close watch on it, of course."

"Certainly, Mr. Tillottson, we shall keep in constant communication with you."

"Let me say this one thing," said Tillottson, impressively, "when I trust a man I trust him through and through. But if he plays me false, by God, I'll take it out of him if it costs me my life!"

"You can depend upon me, sir," said Cutter, quietly, although that miserable physical fear which he could not control shot through him like a spasm. "I shall have as much interest in this deal as you. I'm equally anxious with you to clear a large sum of money by the first of the year."

"I warn you to keep out of this thing, except as a broker. I don't want any hampering conditions or side issues in my affairs."

"Trust me, Mr. Tillottson. I shall confine myself strictly to business in this connection. By the way, you didn't tell me what it was that was going to prevent shipments of Brazilian coffee."

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“No,” said Tillottson, bluntly. “I didn’t. That’ll come out later in the game.”

“All right,” returned Cutter, smoothly enough in spite of his chagrin at this withholding of the details of the deciding factor in the proposed speculation. “Would you like to see the beginning of the deal?”

“I would.”

“You know, coffee is sold on ‘Change in lots of two hundred and fifty bags, or multiples of two hundred and fifty, only; each bag contains one hundred and thirty pounds. There are nine grades, and the price is based on number seven grade, which is the standard. For instance, if you buy one hundred lots of number seven, that means that you buy twenty-five thousand bags, or three million two hundred and fifty thousand pounds, grade number seven. The seller can deliver any grade of coffee in filling that order, the difference in price of the various grades being adjusted on a scale determined by the Exchange.”

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“I understand. Go ahead.”

Mr. Cutter lifted the telephone receiver from the hook, and placed his mouth to the transmitter.

“Give me 1172 Coffee Enchange,” he said. “Is that you, Drewitt?”

“Yes.”

“This is Cutter. About how many, Mr. Tillottson?” turning aside.

“Oh, about two hundred lots, that’ll be fifty thousand bags, won’t it?”

“Yes, but you’d better make it twenty-five thousand bags. Keep it going by small increments.”

“All right.”

“Buy twenty-five thousand bags of December coffee. Repeat the order twice during the day, without exciting any suspicion.”

“Very good.”

Cutter hung the receiver back on its hook.

“The deal is on, Mr. Tillottson,” he said, quietly.

“Good!” exclaimed Tillottson. “I’m glad of it.”

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“We'll try to make it a successful one,” returned the other man, smiling.

That afternoon, as has been seen, Mr. Cutter called on Miss Livingstore.

CHAPTER VII

MR. BERTIE LIVINGSTONE APPEALS IN VAIN

Mr. Cutter faithfully executed the commissions of Mr. Tillottson. Not only was it proper but it was to his own interest as well to play fair. Certainly this was true of the early stages of the deal. If it were determined later, in Mr. Cutter's judgment, that Tillottson could not succeed in cornering coffee his course might be different; and in that case he would have no hesitation whatever in throwing his principal over.

Mr. Cutter was a man of average morality. People who think of the average man imagine a character midway between the highest and lowest specimens of humanity, and take no account of quantitative factors which should be considered in striking a mean. The average really is much lower than the

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popular estimation of it. Mr. Cutter's ethics were somewhat faulty. He was honest, because it was the best policy in his business, but if a better policy could be shown him in dishonesty, he would not have hesitated to put the knife—metaphorically speaking—into Mr. Tillottson or anybody else.

And in this instance Mr. Cutter was playing for far more than money. He too was playing for Miss Livingstone. Money and Miss Livingstone were his gods, and the order of precedence is seen in that arrangement. Although he loved the woman it did not occur to him that he was degrading her by imagining that she could be bought by money. She did not love him, he was forced to admit, yet he was confident that if he could get enough money he could, in the sporting language of the day, "get the decision," and obtain the prize. Affection would come later. Money would do it. Money was about the only power Mr. Cutter recognized, and its potentialities to him were illimitable.

But there was no haste. The coffee deal was pro-

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gressing satisfactorily and quietly, and nothing could be gained by being precipitate. So he brought to bear in the service of his daring customer every resource of his unusual ability and experience. No such clever manipulation of coffee had ever been seen on 'Change. So cunningly did he cover his bull movements that it was not for six weeks that the Street awakened to the fact that some one was trying to corner December coffee.

Tillottson had been as a lamb on the Exchange when he first entered the deal, but he was shrewd and capable, and he mastered the intricacies of the affair, as it progressed, without difficulty. He was even able to suggest little manœuvres from time to time which showed his practical insight into the operation, and marked him as possessing the makings of a brilliant operator.

Cutter was surprised at this. The one capacity he appreciated and valued was an ability to make money. His respect for his principal grew visibly greater. He began to consider him more carefully

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in the light of a possible rival for Miss Livingstone's affections.

It was quite within the bounds of probability that if Tillottson succeeded in this deal he might, to use that sporting expression again, get the decision, and the prize himself.

Cutter did not know that Tillottson was bound to get the decision anyway.

What he had learned was sufficiently disquieting. He decided that he must be very circumspect in choosing his policy, and the time was fast approaching when he must determine what course he was to pursue. Whether to continue loyal, to keep faith with Tillottson, or covertly to get on the other side, was the question.

The other side of the coffee deal was represented by Bertie Livingstone, naturally enough, just as Tillottson had hoped and anticipated. Bertie came out in the open, as was his habit, being a bold operator, and made a determined and persistent endeavor to keep prices down and break the corner.

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Of course, there were numerous other operators on both sides of the market, but the bulls were represented by Cutter, Drewitt & Co., and the bears by Bertie Livingstone.

No one had the slightest idea as yet who was back of Cutter, Drewitt & Co., but the money to make good all their purchases seemed to come in plentifully. Cutter, Drewitt & Co. bought everything that was offered; they had to, of course. The price had already begun to creep up five points at a time—a point being one one-hundredth of a cent. It was buy, buy, buy, on the part of the bulls, and sell, sell, sell, on the part of the bears, until the transactions reached a magnitude never before recorded in the history of the Coffee Exchange.

As the visible supply of the United States, constantly augmented by the shipments from Europe, passed into the control of Cutter, Drewitt & Co., of New York, the eyes of the coffee world began to turn toward this country. The majority of the Brazilian coffee shippers were still holding their

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stocks for a further rise which appeared certain, but there was evidence that they would not be able to withstand the tremendous pressure on them, to sell, much longer.

The Honorable Reginald, etc., had not yet entered the great coffee deal, at least he had only taken a few "flyers," dabbled in a small way, that is, simply to enable him to learn the ropes, "don't you know." But as the deal began to get in the air he got into telegraphic communication with his hard-headed old father, who was fully advised of all the movements of the American Coffee Exchange, and the old baron cabled his son a large credit, advising him to buy. Lord Revelstone was in possession of the inside information of which Tillottson had spoken regarding the political situation, and consequently was favorably disposed to the side of the bulls.

Colonel Pinckney Tolliver Johnstone had hurried from Brazil, and had gleefully embarked his pile in the deal with his whilom partner, with a spontaneous generosity that would have been refreshing to

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the Street had it been known. Colonel Johnstone was an old bachelor who cared nothing for money, save for the fun it would procure him, and nothing he had ever attempted had he found more amusing than this gigantic speculation in coffee. He was of Southern birth, and as gallant as he was game. That Tillottson, "young Tillottson," he called him, for he was at least ten years older than the engineer, was fighting for his sweetheart added zest to the great play. He entered into it with the enthusiasm of a boy.

"We may lose, old man," he said, "but we'll have a damned fine lot of fun before we git through. And we'll keep these Wall Street sharps on the jump, too, suh."

The bears were confident, however, and Bertie Livingstone, who had embarked the entire remains of his fortune in the game, gave up everything to attend strictly to the business in hand. He fought with a skill and courage which would have delighted his old father, and which awakened the admiration of the

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Street. Indeed, such a duel as was waged between Cutter, Drewitt & Co. and Livingstone was rare on 'Change. They were like two of the most skilled fencers crossing blades. Every point was successively attacked and guarded. Every possible combination of assault and defense was worked. Every thrust was met and returned. The excitement of it, for the players and for the world as well, which was kept fully advised by the daily press, was simply terrific.

Still the coffee came streaming into New York on ship after ship, still the prices went up and up. The pile of the two men ran down and down. There wasn't much of it left when, toward the latter part of December, the astonishing news was suddenly sprung upon the world that Germany and England had instituted a so-called peaceful blockade of the coasts of Brazil in order to get their claims against that nation adjusted. Tillottson and Johnstone heaved a long sigh of relief when this news was flashed over the wires. It meant salvation for them. For

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the first time in his life the former had become nervous. He was playing for such a stake, you see. Old Johnstone was entirely composed.

“Don’t worry,” he said, often, “about the loss of the money, old man. If it goes we can make some more.”

“I don’t care a hang for the money,” returned Tillottson, “and you know it. It’s the lady.”

“In course, in course.”

“I’ll say this much, Pinck, I never was so scared in my life.”

“Gosh, you must love her!” said his friend, who measured Tillottson’s devotion by this strange admission of timidity, the like of which he had never heard from his lips before.

“I do. Let’s see how much capital is left.”

“Bout two millions, I reckon.”

“All right. Suppose we go down to see Cutter about the future. This strain is terrible on me. If my hair wasn’t white now I don’t know what would happen. It’s the woman, you know. I think I can

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face anything better than a woman, especially since I——”

“In course, in course; you’re all right, old man,” said Johnstone, consolingly, yet there was a touch of pity in his glance as they threaded their way through the crowds on Nassau Street.

It was a place which excited the admiration and wonder of Colonel Johnstone.

“It seems to me it’s like a mountain cañon on a small scale,” he was wont to observe, “only there’s a river of people instead of water roarin’ through the bottom of it.”

Mr. Cutter had heard the news from Brazil as soon as the partners. The Street had heard it also. The wires were smoking with telegrams to South America, but in vain. Not a pound of coffee could be shipped. It had been the plan of Livingstone to hold the Brazilian coffee to the last minute, then bring it up to New York in fleets and unload it on the market in the last few days in such quantities that no individual operator, nor even a com-

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bination of operators, could buy what was offered. But he waited just too long, for the blockade shut Brazil as hard and fast as if she were behind a burglar-proof door with a set time-lock on it. Not a pound of coffee could be obtained from South America unless the blockade was raised at once.

The harbors of Rio, Bahia and Santos were crowded with ships, many of them loaded ready to sail, anxiously awaiting orders. Not one of them could clear or pass the blockade. Petty acts of aggression on one side met with resistance on the other, and soon the coast was lined with flame and smoke and battering guns. The fiction of a peaceful blockade was blown into the air.

Livingstone, through the Parbuckles, his London connections, moved every influence at his command to get the English Government to raise the blockade, or at least to make an exception for coffee. If he could get coffee he could pay the debts of Brazil, and he would be willing to do so. His efforts were fruitless. He was fought by powerful foemen direct

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at headquarters, who had other axes to grind, and who cared nothing for coffee or its corners one way or the other. Besides, the Brazilians had made two or three aggressive moves which the British people resented, and which stirred the popular mind in England to such an extent that no government could have existed for an hour which even suggested the possibility of a backdown, or of a concession.

The English people wanted blood, money or an apology—not coffee!

It was too late for the Parbuckles or the clique of which Livingstone was the head to do anything with the English authorities.

The coffee dealers in Brazil, entirely unconscious of the impending situation until the blow fell, wrung their hands in anguish. Coffee had reached the record-breaking point of twenty-five cents a pound, and the price was still mounting. They had millions of pounds on hand, and could not sell one bag. It was maddening. They, too, offered to pay the debts of their Government instantly, but the Brazilian

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authorities had feelings of pride also, and the offer was refused, lest it might be called payment under duress. The President of Brazil was making capital out of the situation on his own account, posing as a patriot, and he did not care anything for the coffee dealers.

The United States Government even brought pressure to bear upon the Allied Powers in the shape of the Monroe Doctrine, and it finally succeeded in getting their assent to arbitrate the affair, pending which, however, at the instance of the Emperor William of Germany, to whom the Monroe Doctrine was a pet aversion, they decided to maintain the blockade while the negotiations were being carried on. Nothing could be effected before the first of the year in any event. The coffee in Brazil had to stay there.

In his despair Livingstone turned to Europe. Unfortunately for him the year had been an unusually prosperous one. The commerce of the world had increased beyond the expectation of every one, and

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almost every available vessel was already engaged in the carrying trade. A great number of ships were held in the blockaded ports of Brazil, but every tramp steamer that could be secured was chartered as fast as could be done, to bring coffee from England and France to the United States.

The weather, too, happened to be terrific. Fate, or Providence, seemed to be fighting on the side of the bulls, and the freighters which usually made a ten-day passage found it difficult to get across in fourteen. Still, enough coffee came in to run the resources of the partners down, down, to a desperately narrow margin. What they would have done is impossible to say had not a new ally entered the arena.

The Honorable Reginald Kentigern, etc., making no secret of his intentions, joined the force of the bulls, to Livingstone's furious anger and apprehension. The Honorable Reginald, etc., had hesitated between Livingstone's counsel and that of his father, but had concluded at last, with the money the old

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man had given him, to take his advice. He knew nothing about the rules of the game. He simply went to his brokers, who happened to be honest as well as able, put his money in their hands, and told them to buy.

Therefore, in spite of the furious onslaughts of the bears, the bulls still bought. Every dollar of capital that Bertie could wrench from his legitimate business—and more!—was now in the deal. He could not borrow from any one. The capitalists knew how the situation stood. It was more than probable that the coffee corner was made, and that nothing now could break it. No one would lend him any money on the strength of his chances. The morning of the thirty-first of December found him without an available dollar of capital. He was short on the market thousands of bags. All the money he had would not permit him to cover.

That wasn't the worst of it. Having access to the safe in which his sister's securities were kept, he had taken every one of the stocks, bonds and certificates

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belonging to her upon which money could be raised, without her knowledge, and had hypothecated them for the last dollar they would bear. Her fortune was thus embarked in the deal as well as his own. The day not only spelled ruin for him, but disgrace and shame. He had made a beggar of himself and had plunged his sister into poverty, and for nothing.

He wondered—through a long, sleepless night, the successor of many—if it would not be better for him to blow out his brains then and there. Yet something in him, the spirit of the gambler clutching at a last hope, told him to hold on till the ultimate moment.

Certainly the other side, whoever was backing it up, must have nearly come to the end of its hitherto seemingly inexhaustible resources. If he could only get another million, five hundred thousand, two hundred thousand even, he might be saved. Where could he get it?

The man was almost crazy in his desperation. If he could have done so he would have held anybody

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up on the street and taken the money from him at the pistol point.

In that condition, tearing down Wall Street toward the Coffee Exchange at eleven o'clock in the morning, the opening hour, he ran across Tillottson for the first time since he had ordered him to leave his office. It flashed into his mind that the man had money. He seized him by the collar and drew him into the nearest of the great office buildings. It was crowded with men coming and going, but they found a corner away from the elevator, where they could exchange a few words in comparative privacy.

"I was a beast to you once," said Bertie. "I apologize. I called you a fortune-hunter. I'm sorry. I can put you in the way of making a great deal of money."

"How is that?" asked Tillottson, marking the other man's wretchedly unnerved appearance with savage joy; his revenge would certainly be a complete one.

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“Have you any money?”

“I have.”

“Let me have it. Or come with me into this coffee deal.”

“What coffee deal?”

“Great God, man, where have you been? Don’t you know that I’ve been fighting some unknown backer of Cutter, Drewitt & Co. in December coffee? That I am a bear in the market? To-day is the last day of the deal. If I can carry the thing on for this day I stand to make millions. If I can’t, I lose everything. If you can raise a million, seven hundred thousand, five hundred thousand, for God’s sake——”

“Livingstone,” said Tillottson, quietly, but with a calculating ferocity that froze his listener’s blood, “you insulted me once. I didn’t kill you, but I swore I’d pay you back, and I’m goin’ to. I’ve got you just where I want you. If you were any other man I’d have shot you when you threatened to have me kicked out of your office. Being as you’re her

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brother, I'll only break you. I'm on the other side. I *am* the other side!"

Without another word he turned on his heel and left him.

"Why," thought Bertie in his desperation, as soon as he could recover some of his presence of mind, which was not until it was too late, "did I not appeal to him for Constance's sake!"

However, he had one final resource. He hunted up Smith-Pogis.

"Look here," he said, bluntly, "you're a bull. You've got to change and be a bear."

"Oh—ah—really, don't you know—"

"Oh, stop that infernal stuttering and don't be an idiot. If you can let me have some money I can break the corner to-day."

"But I'm on the other side, you know."

"What difference does that make? When I break the corner I'll reimburse you for your full loss and double your investments besides. I'll do anything. How much have you got in?"

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“About one hundred thousand.”

“Dollars?”

“No, pounds.”

“Have you any more?”

“Not another penny.”

“Can’t you get any more from your father?”

“Not a bit. He cables me I’m already too deep in the thing, and I ought to hedge on the other side. Are you in deep?”

“Over my head.”

“Will it hit you hard?”

“I tell you I’m a beggar this moment unless I can get some money. If I could get five hundred thousand I should be all right.”

“Why don’t you get your sister to help you, then?”

Livingstone hesitated. Perhaps by confiding in this young Englishman he could work on his feelings and induce him to endeavor to get something from his father.

“All her money is in it, too.”

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“Did she put it in?”

“I—I—” Bertie hesitated. He was not yet a good liar. He had always been an honest man heretofore.

“You didn’t put it in without her knowing it?”

“Yes,” answered the miserable man.

The Honorable Reginald, etc., straightened up. With extraordinary volubility he fairly ripped out:

“Theft! By Jove! What a damned infernal cad you are!”

“For God’s sake, man, stop fooling about trifles! Whatever I am makes no difference. Every dollar my sister has will go down in the crash. She will be a beggar, and she doesn’t know. You love her. Think of that.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” said Smith-Pogis, shortly, turning away.

“God bless you, old man, I’ll be at my office or the Exchange. Hurry!” said Bertie, putting out his hand.

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“It’s nothing. I do it for Miss Livingstone, not for you. And I’d rather not shake hands with you, don’t you know. I don’t like the way you do business.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATIONS OF THE HONORABLE REGINALD, ETC.

The efforts of the Honorable Reginald, etc., on the cable were entirely fruitless. Indeed, his father, confident that enough coffee had been shipped during the last two weeks, if it could be delivered in New York, to break the corner, changed his views and cabled him to sell at once. He positively refused to send him any more money.

Smith-Pogis would have seen Bertie Livingstone, after the disclosure which had been made, brought to ruin with the utmost indifference, but, when it came to the question of Miss Livingstone, that was another matter. His anxiety for her welfare was as deep and genuine as his affection for her. He forgot all about his own stake and began to cast about for some way to save her.

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In his dilemma he, too, happened to meet Tillottson, for the latter could not keep away from the Exchange on this momentous day. Now the Honorable Reginald, etc., had a dim idea that Tillottson had money, and a positive assurance that Tillottson loved Miss Livingstone. Perhaps he could do something. He had just passed him with a rather curt nod, for there was no love lost between the two, and, in panic terror lest he might escape in the crowded street, he ran frantically after him, plunging into the mob, elbowing people right and left, his course followed by volleys of curses and imprecations. Fortunately he caught Tillottson opposite one of the famous little chop houses of the region.

"Come in here," he said; "it's quiet here; I want to talk to you. It's a question of life and death."

His anxiety and alarm were plainly apparent. Tillottson was greatly surprised at the Englishman's agitation. He knew the Honorable Reginald, etc., was a bull, no secret had been made of that. The

Negotiations of the Honorable Reginald, etc.

corner was made, and the Englishman's investment would bring him an enormous return. Tillottson was entirely at a loss to understand what was the cause of the other's trepidation. He had learned that Smith-Pogis was a suitor of Miss Livingstone's, but as he had imbibed a hearty contempt for the luckless young Englishman he had not troubled himself greatly about him. He was not, in the engineer's mind, a rival to be feared.

“This—this coffee deal,” began Smith-Pogis.

“It's all right, my son,” said Tillottson, reassuringly. “We have only one more day to carry it through. You're on the right side of the market, and you stand to make a lot of money on whatever you've got in.”

“It's not myself I'm thinking about,” said the other, resentfully. “It's Miss Livingstone.”

“Miss Livingstone!”

“I said so, and I don't like to repeat it—here.”

“What's she got to do with this deal?”

“Her money, you know. It's all in.”

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“Is she against us?”

“Certainly not. But her brother——”

Smith-Pogis hesitated, willing to spare Bertie if possible. It was an ugly thing to have to tell, a nasty charge to lay at any man’s door. Tillottson was entirely uncomprehending. He did not in the least understand. He was hurt beyond expression at the thought which instantly came to him from Smith-Pogis’s halting explanation, that the woman he loved, for whom he was fighting, was herself against him.

“I don’t understand,” he began in a puzzled way.
“Is she fighting the corner with her fortune?”

“No, not consciously, but her brother—damn him, he’s a thief!”

“You don’t mean that he——”

“Yes, that’s the size of it.”

“Has he put it all in?”

“Every dollar of it.”

“Did she speak of it to you?”

“No.”

Negotiations of the Honorable Reginald, etc.

“She doesn’t know it herself then? She doesn’t know you know?”

“She knows nothing at all unless he told her, and I fancy he hasn’t.”

“Who told you, then?”

“He admitted it himself. He did his best to persuade me to get in on his side and get something from London to help him out. I tried, but I can’t get a cent from my father. Unless he can get some money he says he’s ruined. He’s desperate. I wouldn’t care a hang for him, infernal cad, but his sister will be ruined too, you know. I want to break up this corner somehow. To save her, don’t you know. I’d break it myself by selling, only I haven’t got enough in to do more than shake the market.”

“What do you want of me?” asked Tillottson, quietly.

The color had quite gone out of his cheeks at the Honorable Reginald, etc.’s, statement, but the Englishman blundered on, unnoticed.

“I want you to lend me some money, so that

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Livingstone can break the corner and get back her money.”

“But all you’ve got is in that corner, too.”

“What’s the odds? By the way, Bertie offered to pay back all my stock and all the profits that might have been made, if I’d only help him bust the corner.”

“And what do you intend to let him do in case he breaks the corner? Would you take the money?”

There was more depending on that answer than Smith-Pogis dreamed.

“Not a damned cent of it!” he said, briefly, with a fluency that made Tillottson wish to hug him. “All I want now is to get back Miss Livingstone’s fortune. The money I have in can go hang.”

“Smith-Pogis,” exclaimed Tillottson, extending his hand at the same time, “you are a sport and a gentleman. I’m proud to know you.”

“Oh, that’s all right. Will you help?” cried the Honorable Reginald, shaking the other man’s hand.

“I haven’t got a dollar on earth that I can devote

Negotiations of the Honorable Reginald, etc.

to this purpose," said Tillottson, gravely. "I've been operating myself and have got only money enough left to cover my margins."

"Oh, God!" groaned the young Englishman.
"Then she's lost!"

"Hold on! Will you swear on your honor as a gentleman never to tell what I say to you?"

"Yes, yes, of course."

"Well, I'm controlling the coffee market."

"You!"

"I am the corner."

"By Jove, you don't say so?"

"I do."

"Really, you amaze me! What are you going to do? Will you give back Miss Livingstone's money?"

"Smith-Pogis, think a minute. Would she take it?"

"Of course not."

"I can only save her by breaking the corner."

"But that will ruin you."

"That's all right. It'll save her."

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“Tillottson,” said the Honorable Reginald, etc., extending his hand in turn this time, “by Jove, old chap, I want to tell you that I never met a finer gentleman than you are! If Bertie Livingstone is a cad and a thief, you’re the other thing. This is jolly fine of you, old man. I wish I might tell her.”

“If you do, I’ll blow the top of your head off!” said Tillottson, truculently. “Now, you get to cover. I don’t want any one to know this. You’ve been a buyer. Now you sell the minute the market breaks and get back all you can. You’re bound to lose something, but I think you’ll nearly get out clear.”

“Not I, by Jove,” returned the Honorable Reginald, lightly, “I’m in to stay and I’ll stay till the end.”

“Don’t be a fool, young man.”

“I sha’n’t. You’re in to lose for her. So am I.”

“Well, then, for God’s sake don’t say anything about it to any one. I’ll break that corner myself at once. Trust me.”

Negotiations of the Honorable Reginald, etc.

“How are you going to do it?”

“I’ll work it all right. Watch the market go down. Take my advice and get out.”

“I sha’n’t,” replied Smith-Pogis, stubbornly.

“Smith-Pogis, you’re certainly a dead game sport.”

“Thank you, old chap. Where are you staying?” asked the young Englishman, as the American rose to leave him.

“I have a room on Broadway,” giving him the number.

“If you don’t mind,” said Smith-Pogis, “I’d like jolly well to call upon you. I want to see more of you. You’re a ripping old chap and all that, you know.”

“I’ll only be there for a few days, now. I’ve got to hustle down to Brazil and get to work again after this thing is done. But I should like to see you, if you want to come to see me.”

CHAPTER IX

MISS LIVINGSTONE MAKES A DISCOVERY

Shortly after the Coffee Exchange opened that day the excitement began. In the midst of it Bertie Livingstone was summoned to his office by an imperative message from his sister, who had driven down to see him on important business. Under other circumstances, he would have paid no attention to such a message, but now it was impossible for him to refuse. He went as a condemned man might go to his executioner. He tore himself reluctantly from the Exchange and plunged through the storm and rain into his private office.

“Bertie,” said Miss Constance, without preliminaries, “I’ve been thinking about this deal very much lately.”

She saw how haggard and worn, even broken, he

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looked, and she pitied him profoundly. She had watched him during the past few weeks with growing uneasiness, too.

“Yes, Constance.”

“You know I never speculate with any of my money. Tell me how deep you are in this deal.”

“As deep as a man can get in.”

“And if you cannot break the corner?”

“Everything I have will be lost.”

“Well, then,” said Miss Livingstone, reluctantly, and with a long sigh, “I think it is my duty to help you in this affair.”

She had not heard a word from Tillottson, and yet in spite of herself she had somehow connected him with this coffee deal. He was familiar with conditions in Brazil, and had often spoken to her about coffee growing in a small way, and she had an idea that he might endeavor to make his millions in that way. But she had no accurate knowledge, and in the uncertainty she believed it her duty to assist her brother.

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There was no doubt that she was in love with Tillottson now. The feeling he had expressed for her was matched by her own for him. Yet she felt strongly persuaded, in spite of her positive knowledge of the state of her affections, that she should do what she could for her brother, especially as she had no assurance as to what Tillottson was doing. And, even supposing that he did fail in his endeavor, she would have money enough for both!

She had called her carriage and driven through the furious storm of rain and sleet then raging to proffer her help to Bertie. It was growing almost to blizzard proportions, the weather that day, but the square in front of the little Coffee Exchange was crowded with humanity in spite of the tempest, for the day was to decide the great deal. Her coachman had great difficulty in getting through to her brother's office in Hanover Square.

“Bertie,” she said, “take my securities, as many as are necessary—take them all, if you wish, only leave me a little to get along on in case you fail.

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You know I have never been used to poverty, but take all the rest. We must stand by each other."

Bertie buried his head in his hands and groaned.

"Constance," he said, "they are all gone."

"Bertie!"

"Every one of them."

"You didn't take them?"

"I did."

"Without my consent?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Bertie, are you a——?"

"I am—a—theif. And a ruined thief as well."

"The ruin is nothing. We can get over that. But that you—my brother—my father's son—my God!" whispered the woman.

"Constance!" cried the man, "if I could only get a little money—a million, five hundred thousand, two hundred thousand even, I could break the corner even now, and we would be saved."

"Have you tried?"

"Everywhere. I even went to Tillottson."

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“Mr. Tillottson! What did he say?”

“He said he wanted to break me.”

“Is he on the other side?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, that you—” murmured his sister, dazed by this confirmation of her suspicions. “How could you go to that man after the way you treated him?”

“Constance, I could crawl to anybody to get money now.”

“My jewels?”

“They wouldn’t bring enough to make it worth while. You were never fond of diamonds. I wish to God you had been!”

“Is there nothing to be done?”

“Nothing, except to go to smash.”

“When?”

“When the Exchange closes at three this afternoon.”

The man’s misery and despair were appalling. He had been a proud man, and an honest one as

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well, and the temptation to which he had yielded had been an overwhelming one. It had seemed impossible for him to lose. Yet he had not only lost his own money and his sister's also, but he had robbed the Livingstone name of its ancient honor.

“Well,” said Constance, resolutely, at last rising to her feet—she had lived long enough in society to be something of a philosopher—“there is no use repining over it now. If the money is gone we'll have to do something. Work, I suppose. I do not mind the loss of the money so much, but the disgrace—well, I'll say no more about it now.”

“Work? Constance! There is Tillottson. He loves you.”

“Do you think he would marry me now?” cried the woman. “Now that I am a pauper—a dishonored pauper?”

The anguish in her heart made her merciless to her brother. And for the first time in her life she looked more than her age.

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“I refused him when I had millions,” she went on. “Should I take him when all is gone? What was that epithet you flung at him? ‘Fortune-hunter’! I may be shamed, but I have some pride left. There is nothing more to be done. Nothing, nothing. Good-bye.”

“Constance!” cried Bertie, starting after her with hands outstretched. “Forgive me!”

“Not now, Bertie.”

“At least shake hands with me.”

“I would rather not now.”

With her head erect she swept by him and so out of the room.

He was alone. He concluded not to go back to the Exchange. What was the use? Everything had been tried—everything was lost. He opened a private drawer in his desk. There lay a loaded revolver, a dainty little weapon of mother-of-pearl and nickel steel. He kept it for just such an emergency. He had made his last play, and was beaten. Now was the time.

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He lifted the weapon from its velvet bed and put it to his head. He held it there with unsteady hand, his finger on the trigger, but did not pull it.

A moment or two more would not make any great difference.

He sat there in that magnificent office from which the noises of the street were so carefully excluded, thinking. This was the end. Not only of himself, but of Constance as well. She would never survive the disgrace, he fancied, wrongly measuring her strength by his own weakness, when his suicide made all known.

It would be the end of the good old Livingstone name. Slowly he thrust the weapon nearer his right temple. His finger began to press the trigger.

What was that sound that broke in on the perfect stillness? The ticker on the other side of the desk! There was plenty of time for suicide. He laid the weapon down, and, hardly realizing what he did,

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mechanically walked over to it. It had no message but further disaster for him, he knew. Yet the habit was strong upon him. He took up the sliding ribbon of paper and glanced at it. A quotation caught his eye.

Great God, was the market falling? Some one had sold fifty thousand bags at fifty points, or a half a cent off—a tremendous break, indeed. He stared at the tape, fascinated. Again came the ticking. The ribbon slid through his hand. Fifty thousand more bags. Another half cent off.

The corner was breaking, it was broken!

He tore through the streets like a madman. Across the square, bareheaded in spite of the furious storm, he forced his way through the great crowds until he reached the floor of the Exchange. Around the coffee pit pandemonium reigned. It was the centre, the vortex, of a seething maelstrom of passion. One sale succeeded another, and the market was going down. Down, down, down!

The floor was a scene of wild excitement. Hoarse



Around the coffee pit pandemonium reigned.—*Page 168.*

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cries were blasted upward. The crowd of brokers heaved and surged and swayed like a human wave. The place was like a battle-field in the tense emotions in the air, the awful passions it evoked.

Screaming men were frantically shaking their nervous hands aloft before Drewitt, the junior partner of Cutter, Drewitt & Co., who was selling as imperturbably as he had bought. The Exchange was in a perfect roar. The sound of many voices was as the sound of many waters. Clothes were torn, a man fell and was trampled by the mad-dened crowd. The faces of some were white and bloodless. Others were engorged with blood. A kind of madness was in the air—and in the fighting men.

Outside on the street the news of the break had penetrated, and the shouts of the eager crowds drowned the noise of the tempest. Men fought and struggled to get back into the Exchange, but no one left the place for any purpose. The little visitors' gallery was packed as solidly as humanity could be

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squeezed together. And many spectators of the awful scene were women. Some of them fainted, and could with difficulty be succored.

Bertie Livingstone, as a person who could not be denied, with superhuman energy forced himself through the crowds till he reached the pit, and then he began that tremendous onslaught which, before the bell for closing rang, demolished the corner.

Coffee fell twenty cents a pound in two hours. No one could imagine why it was, but the fact was certain nevertheless. The bears had won and in the face of certain defeat, too.

The Livingstone fortune, and the Livingstone honor—at least in the eyes of the world—were saved. The great coffee deal was over. Bertie Livingstone had trebled his fortune for himself and his sister. He had paid for his gains, however, with the loss of his self-respect. He had bartered for them the ancient honor of his once unsullied name.

But he was saved. The corner was broken. As

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the bell struck and the long agony was over, with the assurance of safety, he staggered toward the wall, reeling like a drunken man, until he collapsed utterly and fell prostrate in a senseless heap before the telephone he had been striving to reach.

CHAPTER X

THE ONLY WAY OUT OF IT FOR A GENTLEMAN

The communication which Tillottson had received from the Honorable Reginald was the most startling which had ever been made to him in his long career. For the moment he was conscious of but one thing, that the brilliant deal which he had engineered and all but carried to a successful conclusion meant the ruin in fortune of the woman for whom he had been waging his great battle. Coincident with this apprehension the conviction sprang into his mind that at all hazards she must be saved.

Accustomed to meet dangers and to overcome them on the instant, he had answered Smith-Pogis as he had, giving him a positive assurance that Miss Livingstone should not be the sufferer in the affair. There was only one way to effect that, he very well knew. The corner must be broken.

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With that decision his own hopes went blowing down the wind. It is not every man who can give up all that life holds dear to him with so little outward manifestation of emotion as Tillottson then presented.

His keen mind perceived at once all the phases of the situation. If his corner ruined Miss Livingstone he felt that there was no way in which he could make up to her for the loss of her fortune. He could not return to her the money Bertie had embezzled, for he knew she would never receive it. He divined that, having refused him when she had money and believed he had none, she would never accept him when the conditions were reversed and he had the money and she had none. He was equally resolved that if he could not make good his declaration to match her fortune with his own nothing should induce him to ask her for a decision on that suspended question. He would not even accept one under the circumstances.

Half an hour before he had been absolutely con-

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fident of success. There was still left to his partner and himself a sum sufficiently large to take care of any chance arrivals of coffee during the day which Bertie might get hold of, if he could get any more money, and deliver to him. The fearful storm made it probable that such arrivals would be small; and, therefore, there seemed to be no way to defeat him.

He had expected to make his long-deferred call on Miss Livingstone early on the morrow, with the evidences of success in his hands. There was something in the glance she had thrown upon him as she had given him her hands and wished him good luck that had made him almost certain as to what her answer would be. He had been living in the remembrance of that all the time.

Now it was all over. Whether he won or lost she was not for him. It never occurred to him that if he broke his own corner and sacrificed his fortune for her, he would thereby establish such a claim upon her as no woman could resist, especially if—although he did not divine this—the woman had grown to love

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him as Miss Livingstone did. Indeed, it did not seem to him anything of a sacrifice. That phase of the affair did not present itself to him. His course was simple and obvious. No gentleman, no matter what might be at stake, could so conduct himself as to ruin an innocent woman—even if he did not love her more than life.

It did not occur to Tillottson that Bertie had ruined the innocent woman by his unlawful appropriation of her property. So long as he knew about it himself the onus of the deed would be upon him—unless he prevented it when he had the power to do so.

So in these few moments the little man, not without anguish the more keen because he gave no outward expression of it—it has been before remarked that your still waters run deep!—gave up his fortune and his love for the sake of a woman. He gave up something more, too, which, while it did not weigh in importance with the first two, was still a thing for which he had long thirsted.

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No man had ever treated Tillottson as Bertie Livingstone had, and lived to boast of it. The relationship of this man to the woman Tillottson adored had saved him from personal punishment which would have eliminated him from any more deals on the Exchange, but Tillottson had thirsted and worked for revenge. He had marked with intense satisfaction that Livingstone would be the greatest sufferer by his successful achievement. He was a very human man, was Tillottson, you see.

And now he would be forced to give up love, fortune and revenge.

Fortunately for his peace of mind, he had not a great deal of time to reflect on the situation. Action prompt and immediate was demanded of him. He wasn't quite sure, either, how he was to bring about the desired results. At any rate, the time for dreaming was past. It was getting on toward noon and whatever was to be done must be done before three o'clock. First of all, it was necessary to see his partner. They had appointed to meet at

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twelve o'clock at the bank. It was not quite that time, but in the hope that Johnstone might be there he hastily repaired to Merrill & Frost's, and there by great luck he found him.

It is a singular commentary, not only on the friendship which subsisted between Tillottson and Johnstone, who had been partners in various operations for twenty years or more, but also upon the ideas of chivalry which were cherished by such soldiers of fortune as these two, that not the faintest doubt of Johnstone's willingness to sacrifice his own fortune in the vast deal crossed his mind.

“Ed”—Tillottson was usually known as “Ed” among his friends and acquaintances, although that was not his name, because when he was a boy he had hated “Elijah,” and having no better middle name than “Draco,” he had got in the habit of signing his name “E. D.,” which the boys turned into “Ed”—“Ed,” said old Johnstone, “I never enjoyed a game so much before in all my life. We've got 'em where the hair's short, and nobody can

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beat us. We stand to make a pot of money, too, though it ain't the amount, but the fun of the game that ketches me. I'm obleeged to you, old pard, for having interduced me to this thing. Yes, suh, it beats anything I was ever in, and——”

“Pinck,” said Tillottson, gravely, “I'm sorry to tell you the game's up.”

“No?” cried Johnstone. “Are we beat?”

He didn't change a muscle or an expression.

“Well, we had a damned fine run for our money,” he continued.

“We're not beaten; nothing on earth could do that.”

“What's the matter, then?”

“We've cornered the coffee, we own everything in sight, the price is jumping up every minute, but——”

“But what? What's going to happen? What's going to beat us?”

“I am. We are, ourselves.”

“I don't ketch on.”

“I'm going to bust the market myself.”

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“The hell you say!”

“Yes. It is hell, old man, but I—I have to.”

“What are you goin’ to do it for?” asked Colonel Johnstone, curiosity more than anything else in his voice. “It’s a damned pity just when we got all the cards in our own hands to throw over the deal, ain’t it?”

“It sure is, old man, but reasons——”

“Oh, well,” philosophically, “if you’ve got reasons that are good enough, I reckon it’ll have to go through. D’ye mind lettin’ me know what air they, pardner?”

“You know why I went into this thing, old man? I’ve told you the story, and we’ve talked it over. It was for the sake of a woman.”

“Yes, and a blame fine woman too. She’s a handsome gal, she is, Ed. You’re a lucky fellow, I reckon. I got my peepers on her when she was goin’ into her brother’s office this mornin’ wrapped in furs and diamonds and all sorts of things. Whoopee! she’s a oner!”

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“How did you know her?”

“Somebody told me 'twas her. But go on.”

“Well, that white-livered brother of hers——”

“The one that said he would have you kicked out of his office?”

“The same.”

“I never could see, Ed, how you could a-stood that. Bein' so quick on the shoot and so hot-tempered like, you know, as you used to be——”

“You've never been in love.”

“Yes, I have; heaps of times.”

“Not like this.”

“I reckon not. Fire away.”

“Well, he's taken her money, ten million, and thrown it into this corner to beat me. He stole it. She didn't know it, you know. If I hold the corner it's going to ruin her. Now, you know, Pinckney Johnstone, no gent would ruin an innocent woman for his own gain.”

“In course not. Did she tell you?”

“Certainly not! I have'nt seen her since—noth-

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ing would make her say a word about it to me. I don't even believe she knows it yet. I learned it from the Englishman."

"That maverick, that little tenderfoot?"

"Maverick he may be, old man, but he's a man for all that. He showed himself a gentleman this morning. He's on our side to the extent of about half a million, which he stands to lose, and which he's game to lose for her sake, too. Oh, there's no doubt about this thing. In the first place, I always knew that Bertie boy was a pup. So, with your permission, I'm going to break the corner to save her."

"You have it, pardner," said Johnstone, cheerfully. "You went in this thing for love, and I went in it for fun. I've never had so much fun in my life, and when I git some money I'm goin' in it agin."

"I never am," returned Tillottson, gravely. "I'm sick of such things. I've had enough to last me. I only went in it for her sake——"

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“ Ed, if you tell that gal what you’ve done, you’ll win the game with her, all right.”

“ I’ll never tell her. What do you take me for? No, I give it all up—her money, and the chance to get even with that brother of hers.”

“ Ed Tillottson, I always knowed you was a high-souled gent, but blame me if I ever thought you was such a fine one. It’s wuth five millions to hev an opportunity to tell you that my opinion of you is higher to-day than it ever was before—and it’s always been mighty high. It’s harder on you than it is on me, pardner. I’m only losin’ money, you’re losin’ all. I can make more,” he continued, grasping the other man’s hands, “ so, sail in and count on me for anything.”

“ All right, old man,” said Tillottson, briefly. “ You’re sacrifice is greater than mine, for you wouldn’t have been in this thing but for me, to please me——”

“ And for the fun, too, Eddie, boy, don’t forgit that.”

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“ Well, you’ll have fun enough before it is over,” answered Tillottson, with a ghastly attempt at a smile.

“ How air you goin’ to bust the corner?”

“ There’s only one way. That’s to throw our holdings on the market.”

“ How is it goin’ to be done?”

“ Through Cutter.”

“ Suppose he won’t do it? It seems to me I suspicion he’s been mixing a leetle in this affair on his own hook.”

“ I warned him not to do it,” replied Tillottson. “ I’ve cautioned him again and again to stay out of it except as our agent, and if he’s gone back on my instructions he’ll have to look out for himself. He’s got to break that corner.”

“ But how are you goin’ to make him?”

Tillottson reached his hand back to his pocket, where, contrary to the supposition of Bertie Livingstone, he had not kept his handkerchief, and pulled out a serviceable weapon, smaller than he

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was accustomed to carry when really at work, but one meant for business nevertheless.

“With this,” he said.

“But kin you?”

“I can. The man is a physical coward. I sized him up for that long since.”

“You’re right. So did I,” assented Johnstone.

“I’ll get him alone in his office and threaten to blow out his brains if he don’t do what I want.”

“Don’t I come in this thing somewhere?” pleaded the elder man, as one might who asked a great favor. “Can’t you work me in some place? I’m right handy with a gun myself, you know.”

“Of course you are in it. In fact, I couldn’t do it without you,” said Tillottson, promptly. “The minute Cutter begins to sell, that is, to order sales made over the telephone, his door will be besieged by a mass of men, and I want you to stand outside and keep them off. Will you do it?”

“Will I? I’ll hold off the whole of New York.

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Whoopee! this here dealin' in stocks is the most excitin' thing I ever tackled."

"Well, it's getting late now. It's after twelve, and the Coffee Exchange closes at three. We'd better get a move on us. Is your gun loaded and ready?"

"Ed," said the other, reproachfully, "did you ever know me when my artillery wasn't in workin' order and ready for use? Go 'long! I'll tell you another thing, too. I've got a permit to carry a weapon, too."

"What did you get it for?"

"I'm afeered of bein' held up by some of these Wall Street desperadoes," laughed Johnstone.

CHAPTER XI

THE HORRIBLE MISERY OF MR. CUNNINGHAME CUTTER

Mr. Cunningham Cutter, after mature deliberation, had decided that it was for his best interests to play fair with his principal. He ordinarily did play fair unless he was persuaded beyond peradventure that it was to his interests not to do so. He had a grave suspicion as to the coffee deal when it was first inaugurated, but as he had been informed at last through Tillottson of what was to be the deciding factor, the near approach of the Brazilian blockade, he had become fully impressed with the entire certainty of success. So much so, in fact, that, disregarding his principal's repeated injunctions, he had entered the deal on his own hook.

Confident that the corner would be carried through, he had invested in it all his private fortune and every cent he could beg or borrow. He

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had done even more than this. He was the custodian of certain trust funds, and these also he threw into the gap for his private gain—unlawfully of course.

Two courses had been open to him. He could either betray Tillottson to Bertie Livingstone at the last moment and make Bertie's influence with his sister the price of the betrayal, or he could ruin Bertie in conjunction with Tillottson, and then assist him to his feet again for the same end. The latter was the safer, as well as the more remunerative course, and therefore he chose it.

For a wonder, being a scoundrel, Cunningham Cutter did not believe that Bertie Livingstone would be a party to anything so underhand as the betrayal of a principal by a broker. As it happened, Cutter and Livingstone were quite on a par from an ethical standpoint; but Cutter, of course, did not know that. Livingstone's honesty was of a higher degree than Cutter's, but when it came to the crucial moment they were both thieves. Perhaps Cutter may

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stand higher than Livingstone, for Livingstone was simply thieving to avoid ruin, while Cutter was thieving for the sake of a woman. However, the distinction is of little moment. The results were the same. We have seen how Livingstone had come face to face with ruin. Cutter had no experience of that kind—yet.

At twelve o'clock on the last day of December he regarded the situation as safe beyond the possibility of failure. All they had to do was to hold up the market until the Exchange closed and then settle up. The profits would be enormous. His legitimate share in the way of commissions would be very great, and he also stood to win an immense sum through his own private speculation.

The dream that he had cherished since he first met Miss Livingstone some years before seemed to be in a fair way of realization. Of course there was Tilloftson to be reckoned with, but he fancied he could easily dispose of him. Mr. Cutter made the unusual mistake, for him, of underestimating the ability of

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his rival. He had no hesitation in considering himself a foregone victor in any trial of strength between them. After the deal was over he could find some means to dispossess Tillottson of his fortune. He flattered himself that he had gained the confidence of the other man and that the successful consummation of their brilliant speculation would establish him in the very highest possible position in the engineer's mind, so that it would be easy to wreck him.

As it happened, however, the trial of strength came sooner than he had expected, in a way which was absolutely impossible for him to foresee, and Tillottson attacked him on the very side on which he was weakest.

Although the corner was practically made and but three hours remained through which to carry it, it was yet necessary to watch every move carefully. Drewitt, the junior partner, who was really not much more than a chief clerk, since Cutter was the whole firm, was stationed on the floor of the Ex-

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change with instructions to report instantly anything unusual and be prepared to execute any commissions. The situation was too tense, the excitement too great, for any thought of luncheon.

Cutter, Drewitt & Co. controlled the market absolutely, and such small lots as were offered were instantly snapped up. Contrary to expectations, one ship did get in, but her cargo was a mere drop in the bucket. It had been bought up at once that morning. Several ships had been reported by wireless telegraphy, but it was a foregone conclusion that they would not arrive in time in the face of the storm then blowing, and, if they did by any chance, by straining every nerve the partners had enough money to take care of their cargoes.

The situation from Cutter's point of view was faultless, when to him entered Messrs. Tillottson and Johnstone.

The clerks in the outer office knowing their employer to be alone had ushered the two men into the private office without ceremony. Of course, that

The Misery of Mr. Cunningham Cutter

Tillottson and Johnstone were backing the deal was known to all the clerks, although the secret had been so well kept that the outside world had not dreamed of it. The two men came into the office, wearing expressions of unusual gravity.

“Good morning, gentlemen,” said Cutter, politely, rising at the same time. “Be seated. I suppose you realize that we have achieved the impossible and that the market is cornered. You will more than double your capital when the Exchange closes at three o’clock. The bears are running away. There is nothing under the sun that can break the corner now. I think I may say that we have engineered this deal in a faultless way, and I say, too, that you have backed me up nobly.”

“Mr. Cutter,” said Tillottson, abruptly, “the corner must be broken.”

“My dear Mr. Tillottson, are you aware of what you are saying?” returned the broker, not quite realizing the extent of so momentous a declaration delivered in such an offhand way.

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“Perfectly. The corner must be broken. We’re here to direct you to break it.”

He looked interrogatively at Johnstone.

“Right ye air, pardner,” said the old man.

“But gentlemen, I don’t understand.”

“Tain’t necessary that you should,” said Johnstone. “We’re here to give orders, not explanations. Explainin’ is allus dangerous.”

For once Cutter’s self-possession deserted him. He stared at Johnstone more in amazement than anything else, for he could scarcely grasp the situation yet.

“Excuse me, Johnstone,” said Tillottson. “I think something is due Mr. Cutter. I propose to explain to him, with your permission.”

“You have it. Go ahead.”

“Mr. Cutter, I learned an hour ago that—of course you will consider this strictly confidential?”

Mr. Cutter bowed. His head was whirling with the important news, which as yet he did not at all comprehend.

The Misery of Mr. Cunningham Cutter

“Mr. Bertie Livingstone has put in all his sister’s securities in his endeavor to fight us—without her knowledge or consent, I mean. If we hold on she is ruined. I wouldn’t care a hang for him, but I can’t bring Miss Livingstone to poverty. My partner and I will be no parties to the ruin of an innocent woman. So we are here to break that corner.”

“Impossible!” cried Cutter; “you don’t know what you say. Why, man, you will be ruined, absolutely ruined! Every dollar you have on earth will be swept out of your hands.”

“We understand that, of course.”

“And you are willing to give up your entire fortune? Think! Are you going to break up this magnificent deal just when you have brought it to a triumphant fruition? Is all your labor, anxiety, force, to count for nothing? For a mere scruple, for a quixotism? Are you going to throw away the greatest chance that has ever come in the history of the Coffee Exchange? I don’t believe it. I can’t

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understand it. It means ruin! You will be beggared——”

“Mr. Cutter, as our agent,” interrupted Tillotson, calmly, “I take it that you are doing the correct thing in laying before us the consequences of our action, and we thank you for your caution. It is your business to save us if you can. In this case I tell you you can’t. We know all about it. We’ll abide the consequences, whatever they are. The corner must be broken and Miss Livingstone’s fortune saved.”

“But your fortune, man!”

“I have a greater interest in the matter than that expressed by any sum of money,” returned Tillotson, quietly; “the fortune must go.”

“I cannot do it!” gasped Cutter.

“You must!”

“How? How?” he quivered, throwing an appealing glance at the clock, hoping to save time.

“By telephoning to your representative in the Exchange to sell coffee, and keep on selling.”

The Misery of Mr. Cunningham Cutter

“Man, do you know the price will tumble the instant the bears learn that we are selling?”

“I do.”

“I shall be ruined!” groaned Cutter, hoarsely.

“We’ve thought of that,” said Tillottson, “and we’ve figured that we’ve money enough left to take care of all our options, and to pay you all you may require in our behalf.”

“It isn’t that! Every dollar I have on earth is in that corner.”

“I told you he’d play us tricks, Ed,” said Johnstone.

“I have not played you false,” cried Cutter. “When I saw the corner was all but made I put my own money in it, and every dollar I could borrow or scrape up besides.”

“I told you not to do it,” said Tillottson, sternly; “I warned you to keep out of this deal. If you’ve gone in on your own hook in spite of what I told you, I’m sorry for you, but that doesn’t change my

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determination a bit. I'd rather ruin you than her, you see."

Mr. Tillottson observed with great mental pain that Mr. Cutter was made from different stuff than the Honorable Reginald.

"Now, we've done enough talking," he continued, "it's getting on toward one o'clock. We'd better begin."

"But how?" cried Cutter, his face as white as death, perspiration standing out on his forehead in great beads.

"Through the telephone, just as you did two months ago."

"I won't do it! You're mad, crazy!" cried Cutter, as an idea flashed into his mind. "I'll have you locked up until three o'clock."

The outer office was filled with clerks who were devoted to Cutter, and whose rise or fall depended upon Cutter's success, for, following his example, they had also entered the deal, although he, too, had cautioned them to keep out. It occurred to

The Misery of Mr. Cunningham Cutter

Cutter that he could call them in and have the two men restrained forcibly until three o'clock, when the corner would be made and they could do what they pleased. He touched a push button by his side, and not satisfied with that opened his mouth to call out.

He had made a mistake, however, in announcing his programme too early. He found himself confronted, as he turned his head toward the door, by two revolvers, which had been whipped out of two hip pockets with a suddenness that savored of magic.

“Utter a sound,” said Tillottson, in a low voice which did not at all comport with his blazing glance, “and you’re a dead man! Secure the door, Johnstone,” he went on. “I’ve got him covered. Lively!”

With an agility that was astonishing in a man so old, Johnstone sprang to the door just in time to spring the latch before the clerk who had been summoned by the bell reached it.

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“Tell him that you made a mistake; you didn’t want him,” whispered Tillottson, as the man shook the door. “You were never nearer hell than you are now, Cutter,” he added, laconically.

A deadly fear was on the broker.

“Did you ring, sir?” cried the clerk outside.

Twice the prisoner strove to speak. Tillottson raised his arm and fairly shoved the barrel of the revolver into his face.

“Answer!” he whispered.

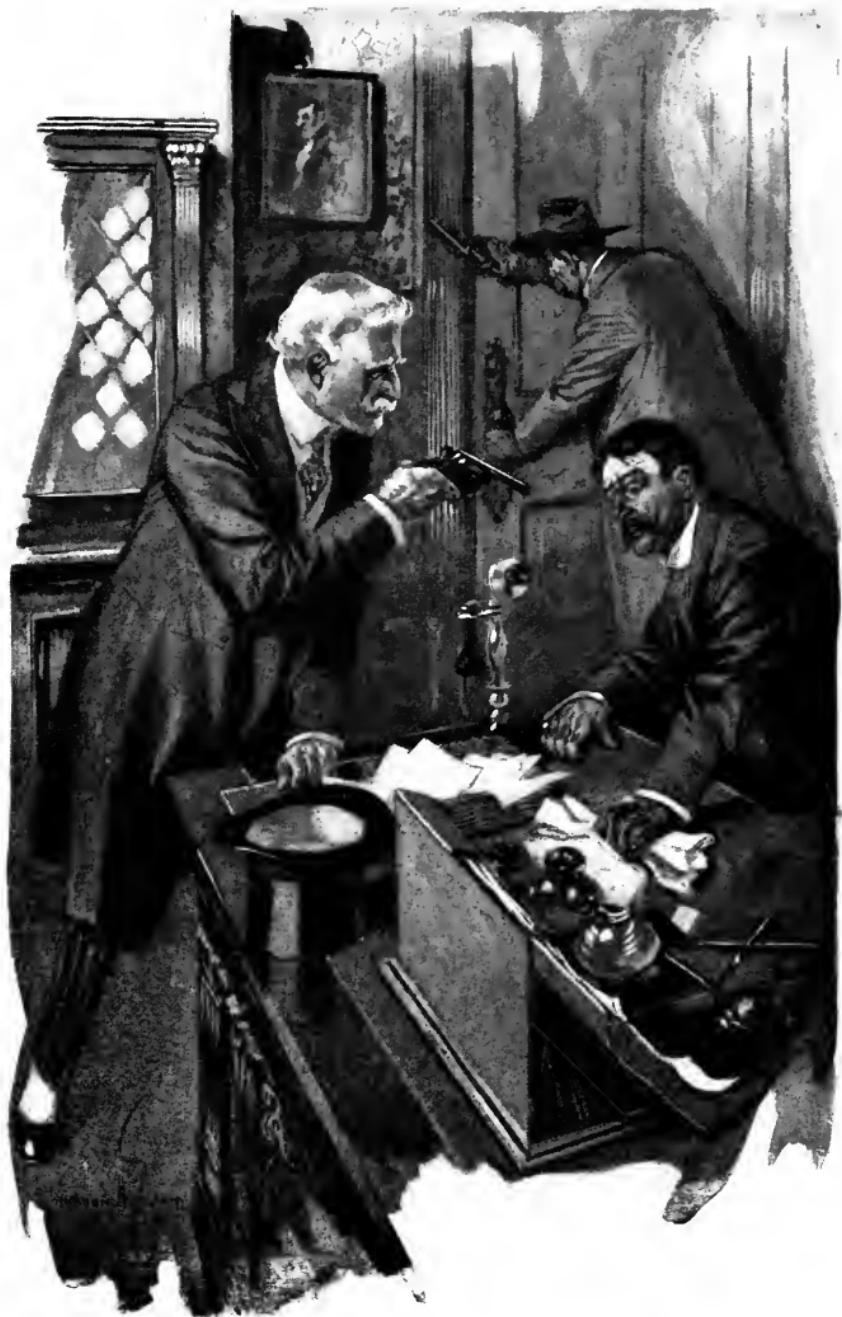
“Mistake!” gasped the frightened man. “Never—mind.”

“All right, sir,” answered the clerk, turning away.

“Now, telephone!” said Tillottson. “Call up your private ’phone in the Exchange. Ask for Drewitt. We’ll start in with fifty thousand bags.”

“You will ruin me,” groaned the broker, as with trembling hands he reached for the ’phone.

“I’m sorry to ruin you, but as between you and



“ You were never nearer Hell than you are now.”

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The Misery of Mr. Cunningham Cutter

Miss Livingstone, you go every time. Besides, I warned you. It serves you right. This is my corner. You ought to have kept out of it. If you had obeyed orders you would have been all right. Have you got him?"

The broker nodded helplessly.

"Tell him what I say. You've sized me up. You know I'm not a man to threaten. By God, I'll murder you where you stand if you don't do just what I tell you!"

"Is that you, Drewitt?" gasped out Cutter, in a hoarse voice.

"Yes," answered the person on the other end of the wire. "Who is speaking?"

"Cutter."

"Oh! I didn't recognize the voice. What's the matter?"

"The——"

Cutter shot one agonized glance toward the ruthless Tillottson.

"Go on!" said the engineer, laying his hand on

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Cutter's neck. By this time he had the barrel of the pistol against the latter's temple.

"This is a double-acting weapon, and a hair-trigger," he said in his softest and yet most truculent voice. "Tell him the corner must be busted."

"The corner is broken," whispered the man; "sell fifty thousand bags at once."

"Give me the private signal," Drewitt called out, so as to be perfectly certain that the order was from the proper person. As the miserable man gave the signal—

"Tell him you will send him a written order, too," interrupted Tillottson opportunely enough at this moment.

The telephone was an unusually good one, and the engineer had managed to catch a large part of the conversation, standing, as he had been, with his own ear close to the receiver. "Say that you will send it up at once, but he ain't to wait for it. Now, hang up the receiver."

"Mr. Tillottson," said Cutter, brokenly, "for

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God's sake, it's not too late! This will start a break, but if we hold off we can retrieve the thing and hold up the market. Think what you are doing."

"You fool!" said Tillottson. "Do you suppose I have not thought all about this thing? I know what I am doing, and I know what you're doing, too. Now you write out an order to Drewitt to bust the corner wide open, right away. To sell in lots of fifty thousand bags every five minutes. I want the price slammed down."

"Mr. Tillottson—" began Cutter.

"No talk now! Write it out!"

"It's against the rules of the Exchange."

"Damn the rules of the Exchange! I'm playing this game now by my own rules. Write!"

Cutter would have given his soul for an ounce of physical courage. Johnstone was an old man, Tillottson a small one. He was big enough for both of them. Never had his nervous disability played him a more scurvy trick. His hands trembled so

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that he could scarcely write. In fact, when the first order for selling was submitted Tillottson rejected it, and made him prepare another. The little man's manner was simply ferocious. Under the influence of his terror Cutter was completely subservient to his will. Another order was written and signed which was sufficiently firm to pass muster. At any rate, it would have to do.

“Johnstone,” said Tillottson, who had assumed, as was his right, the leading position in the little drama in the private office, “please take this to the outer office and tell the chief clerk—what’s his name, Cutter?”

“Renfrew.”

“Tell Renfrew to send it to Mr. Drewitt at once. Then you stand outside the door and keep everybody out of this room. Under no circumstances let them even get a peep in. I suppose there’ll be a crowd around this office in a short time to know what this is all about. You just keep them back. Don’t explain.”

The Misery of Mr. Cunningham Cutter

“I’ll explain with this,” grimly answered Johnstone, lifting his gun.

He had been enjoying the situation hugely. Never had he witnessed or participated in a greater game than this one. He had entirely forgotten his millions, which, after all, was perhaps the most philosophical view to be taken. If he had to lose he might as well get all the fun out of it he could.

A messenger was duly despatched to Mr. Drewitt with the order, and then the three, a prey to three varying sets of emotions, settled themselves to await developments.

CHAPTER XII

CUTTER AND TILLOTTSON WATCH THE TICKER

Old Johnstone settled himself comfortably in a chair outside the door in the large hallway, or ante-room, between the private and public offices. Tillottson and the broker sat side by side in the inner office. The miserable Cutter made several attempts to engage his intimidator in conversation, but his venture was sternly silenced by Tillottson. Indeed, the latter would not let him make a move. He allowed him to do nothing except to answer the telephone.

Drewitt reported so soon as he had sold the first fifty thousand bags, and immediately received orders to sell another similar amount. Before he had disposed of this one he got the written order to continue the sale.

Greatly surprised, but with implicit confidence in

Cutter and Tillottson Watch the Ticker

Cutter's judgment—indeed, he had not been admitted into his partner's personal ramifications in the deal—he coolly proceeded to carry out the orders, entirely unaware that it spelt ruin for him, too. As he did so he transmitted information, via the telephone and his subordinates, from time to time, of the state of the rapidly falling market.

But there was in Cutter's private office a more speedy indicator even than the telephone, and that was the ticker. The wretched broker was marched over to the diabolical machine, the source of so much joy or so much misery to those who scan it, by his inexorable tormentor. Before it he was forced to read off his own doom. In gasping, broken, terrified accents he repeated aloud for Tillottson's benefit the story of the break and the rapid, continuous fall of the market.

No such scene had ever been enacted in a broker's office in New York. There he stood, having achieved the corner, watching the wrecking of his own brilliant work. Desperate, filled with murder-

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ous thoughts, but afraid, terrified. Mad with anger and hatred, but impotent, powerless, undone!

The remorseless tape with its lengthening record of his progressing ruin spun interminably through his fingers. The figures blurred before his distracted vision. He longed to tear the paper to pieces, shatter the glass case into fragments, smash the machine to bits ; but by his side stood the constraining force that compelled him to read on and on.

He was alone with Tillottson. Why could he not summon courage enough to master him ? He cursed himself for his cowardice again and again. He swore that he would resist, but each moment found him still compliant. There was no help for him. He was as a lost soul on the brink of judgment.

As his manipulation of the market had been masterly and successful, so was his downfall correspondingly rapid and terrific. The exultant bears would have no mercy. As the excitement in the Exchange was terrible, so even the steady rustle of the paper

Cutter and Tillottson Watch the Ticker

spinning out from the machine seemed surcharged with it.

The silence was only broken by the ticking of the instrument and the hoarse voice of the frenzied man reading the quotations. Tillottson had time to think for almost the first time, and his situation was almost as pitiable as was that of the broker.

Cutter had forgotten his love-affair in the loss of his fortune and the consequent exposure that would result when his ruin made his defalcations public. The punishment for that already loomed large before him. Tillottson thought only of the woman. So the time dragged on.

“My God!” gasped Cutter, at last, “I can’t stand this any longer! Since we are to fail I wish it were three o’clock and all over.”

CHAPTER XIII

COLONEL JOHNSTONE KEEPS THE DOOR

Something else was to happen, however, before the Exchange closed that day.

There was a sudden commotion outside the door where Colonel Johnstone kept guard. The ante-room of the private office was invaded by a crowd of people. The noise they made penetrated even through the heavy partitions. Cutter, with a flicker of hope, started to his feet in a vain endeavor to dart to the door. He might save something if he could only get away. But Tillottson was ready. The little man forced him back into a chair, shook him like a rat, and stood over him with that frightful weapon in his hand.

“Don’t say a word!” he whispered, “except what I tell you.”

Some of the men outside had been on the bull side

Colonel Johnstone Keeps the Door

of the market, and, utterly unable to account for the sudden collapse of the corner which they had chosen of their own motion to support, they had, in their anger and desperation, rushed to the office for an explanation.

With them were several reporters seeking to interview Cutter, and, if possible, find out the cause for the break. And the number was swelled by the clerks in the outer office. They were astonished at being confronted by a tall, lean, fierce-looking old man with a huge slouch hat on his head, holding a formidable pair of revolvers carelessly in his hands.

“We want to see Mr. Cutter!” burst out one man who had invested heavily.

“You can’t see him now, suh,” answered Johnstone, coolly. “He tole me to set out here and keep everybody from him.”

“I must see him!” cried another man. “There is no reason on God’s earth why this corner should not have gone through. What does he mean by doing business in this way? He has betrayed us!”

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The speaker was one of the men whom Cutter had employed to deal with his private fortune, and the man's own fortune was at stake as well. His request was succeeded by another and another, until finally the crowd surged about old Johnstone with mingled curses, threats and appeals, to all of which he calmly turned a deaf ear. There was something in the appearance of the grim old man that seemed to promise death to any who might cross him.

"I'm settin' here," he said, making himself heard at last, "to keep this door and to keep you 'uns out. I'm goin' to do it. If ary one of you makes another threatenin' move toward me I'll shoot him plum full of holes! It'll be self-defence in my case, and sure death to you. Keep cool. I'll let you in——"

"When?"

"When it's three o'clock," answered the old man, pulling out his watch. "It wants fifteen minutes to three now, I take it."

"It will be too late then! It's too late now!" screamed one of the men.

Colonel Johnstone Keeps the Door

“I ain’t got nuthin’ to do with that.”

“Cutter!” suddenly called out a loud voice from the background, its owner intent to make himself heard in the private office, “for God’s sake, what’s the meaning of this break?”

“Tell him it is all right,” said Tillottson.

“It isn’t. They want an explanation,” wailed the broker.

“Tell ‘em to go to hell,” said Tillottson; “they’ll understand that.”

“I can’t! I can’t! They’d kill me! They’ll break the door down!”

“Not while Johnstone’s got the drop on ‘em.”

“Boys,” said one of the men outside, suddenly, “let’s get out of this. Perhaps we can do something at the Exchange.”

“No, you don’t, gents,” said the Colonel, who was having the time of his life, “jest all of you move over into that corner away from that outside door. Quick, as you value your lives!”

He rose to his feet, his pistols bearing point-blank

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on the crowd. Johnstone preferred the old-fashioned single-acting weapon as being the most useful for intimidation in a crowd. And they heard him cock the two weapons before he pointed them at the crowd. The clicking of the hammers was a sound full of menace.

There was something in the appearance of the old man that startled the New Yorkers. They were not used to this kind of a play. One by one they edged away from the door over into the corner of the room, the reporters going with the rest, their pencils flying furiously meanwhile. They did not often get hold of a story like that. There was no exit so long as old Johnstone chose to cover both doors, which from his position he could easily do. The men pressed into each other like a pack of terrified sheep.

“That’s all right, boys, I’ll not hurt you so long’s you behave,” said the old man, smiling genially. “I know it’s a leetle uncomfortable for you in that corner. I’m runnin’ a leetle private corner of my

Colonel Johnstone Keeps the Door

own, ye see. But it won't be fer long. I'll let you go at three o'clock. You kin bust it then."

"We'll have you arrested for carrying concealed weapons," cried one man.

"Not much you won't," said Johnstone, smiling. "I've got a permit to carry 'em to perteet my life from you New York bloods, and I'm perteeting it now. Them moves of yourn a minute sense was mighty threatenin' ones, gents. I'm really afeered for my life among sech bad men as you fellers be."

Somebody laughed. Somebody who was not as deep in the affair as the others.

"I'm glad you kin laugh," said Johnstone, gravely. "It's a most serious thing fer me."

"It's a damned outrage!" cried one man. "We won't submit to it! Let's make a rush at him!"

"Come along, gents! W'enever you're ready."

The room was filled with noise now. Threats against Johnstone, against Cutter, appeals to him, though at that time nothing could have been done. In all the confusion no one ventured to get out of his

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place, though. No one wanted to be a target for a bullet from that smiling but terrible old man's weapons. No one wanted to evoke the first shot.

Finally the big clock in the outer office struck three. Coffee had dropped to the lowest point it had reached in three months. The corner was hopelessly and forever broken.

"You kin go now, gents," said Johnstone, calmly.

"We want to see Cutter."

"I reckon you can't see him yet," said the old man. "I don't think he'd care to see you all just now. You better mosey on."

He made a threatening movement toward them.

"Well, we can see him to-morrow," said one man.

"We'll take it out of him then."

In a few moments the place was quite empty. Johnstone tapped gently on the door.

"They're gone," he said, as Tillottson opened it.

Poor Cutter sat in a huddled heap on his chair, completely crushed.

Colonel Johnstone Keeps the Door

“If you will make out your accounts, Mr. Cutter,” said Tillottson, “and let us know what we owe you on our futures, we’ll send you a cheque for the balance.”

Cutter said nothing.

“And,” continued Tillottson, whose contempt for the poor wretch had increased during this interview, “I’d feel more sorry for you if you were a braver man. Look here!”

He snapped the revolver several times full in Cutter’s face. The trigger clicked, there was no report. It had not been loaded, after all. And that completed Cutter’s disgrace.

“Mine was loaded, all right,” said old Johnstone, looking reproachfully at his partner. “I’m allus ready for business. It’s safer.”

“I was afraid I might shoot him up if I’d left the cartridges in the chamber,” answered the other. “I’ll leave it with you, Mr. Cutter, as a souvenir of the occasion. It’s probable that it’s all you’ll get out of the deal.”

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He flung the weapon on the desk and walked out of the office in great triumph, although he was a ruined man.

“Ed,” said Johnstone, “that gun play of ours was about as fine as could be. I ain’t had sech fun for a lot of years. I’m obleeged to you, old man. What’s to do next?”

“Pull our freight for South America, and make some more money. The next steamer sails in three days. I’m going to reserve our state-rooms now.”

“Will we have enough money?”

“Just enough to pay our bills here, and get us back to Rio.”

“There’s that mine of yours. Have you heard anything from it?”

“Not a thing. We’ll attend to that when we get down there. Will you come down to the steamship agent’s with me?”

“No, I guess not. I hev an appintment. I think I’ll mosey up-town. Say, ain’t you goin’ to see the lady?”

Colonel Johnstone Keeps the Door

“No, I guess not. I think I’ll just write her a note. Tell her I failed, wish her good luck, and that’s all.”

“Um!” said Colonel Johnstone. “Well, good-bye.”

CHAPTER XIV

MR. SMITH-POGIS BRINGS THE NEWS TO MISS LIVINGSTONE

Miss Livingstone's emotion as she drove away from her brother's office was almost untranslatable. Never having felt the pinch of poverty, first of all she could not appreciate what it meant to lose her property at one fell swoop. That experience would come later, and abide with her. She would have plenty of time to get all the information going about that. So she dismissed it from her mind, or, if not that, it was overpowered by two other thoughts.

One was the shame and dismay involved in the revelation of her brother's dishonesty. That he had so far sullied the ancient honor of the Livingstones, upon which she had prided herself with a constantly increasing joy and satisfaction all the years of her life, was a source of the most profound grief and

Mr. Smith-Pogis Brings the News

surprise. She believed that she would have cheerfully given up all her money to have her trust and confidence in her brother, in whom she had always taken such pride, restored once more. The loss of her fortune was nothing to her compared to that.

But there was another sense of loss that presently came across her with crushing force, before which even the evidences of her brother's infamy paled their ineffectual fires, and that was the loss of her lover. In one swift sudden bound of recognition she realized that she loved him. Strange, unusual, impossible, as it had appeared to her, and as it would appear to her friends, she loved him with a passion which made all her previous experiences seem like the sentimentalities of a girl. Really she must have loved him all the time, but unconsciously, she decided. Now, under the stimulus of Bertie's defalcations, with the consciousness of the consequent failure of her hopes, she was forced to admit it. That thought swept everything else out of her mind.

Tillottson had been perfectly right in his analysis

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of her character to Smith-Pogis. Having refused him when she was rich and he poor, she would not accept him when he was rich and she poor. She could not. Her pride was as great as his own. He had let the epithet "fortune-hunter" come between them. There it stayed. He had taken a brave resolution in her presence that, until he could match her fortune with one as great, he would not expect an answer to his proposal. She would do the same. It was logic; it was right. Honor required it. She felt that she had to be unusually nice on the point of honor under the circumstances.

She began to wonder if there was any way in which she could make some money; to try his plan for equalizing conditions between them. She realized there was none; her capital had been wiped out. Again, the sum Tillottson would realize from his coffee corner would be entirely beyond her capacity. Indeed, from what Bertie told her, she feared she would have to work for a mere living.

Why had she been such a fool? Why had she

Mr. Smith-Pogis Brings the News

not accepted him when he first offered himself? What a lot of trouble, and sorrow, and anxiety, and shame would have been avoided!

She was very miserable in these thoughts, yet there was some melancholy compensation in her complete and absolute martyrdom. She wondered what Tillottson would say, or do, when he learned the truth, and she pictured herself, as she had been a girl, indeed, bravely renouncing him, turning her back upon all the happiness before her, going out into the cold, hard world alone.

Some people get a great satisfaction out of martyrdom. It was surprising to her that she could, for no one would have imagined, not even she herself, that she was that kind of a woman; but when money goes, and love goes, and trust in humanity goes, there is no telling what a woman may do, or think. She might as well strive for satisfaction somewhere, anyway. That was better than breaking down. She was not clear-headed enough, under these cumulative blows, definitely to determine anything,

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however; and, as a further analysis of her mental condition would scarcely be more illuminating, we pass on.

She passed the afternoon packing up her trinkets and getting ready to move, not realizing that there was no pressing necessity for haste. She was very nervous and unstrung and was really delighted when the card of the Honorable Reginald, etc., was put into her hand.

“Miss Livingstone,” said the Englishman—and how he had developed, she thought, in the two months! He was calmer, more collected; his speech, she found, was much more fluent and easy. There was an added dignity to his boyish appearance.

“Miss Livingstone,” he began, shaking her hand.

“Mr. Smith-Pogis, aren’t you a day too early? To-morrow will be the first.”

“I did not come on that account. But your—brother——”

He hesitated and looked at her sadly.

“Bertie? What of him? He hasn’t——”

Mr. Smith-Pogis Brings the News

It suddenly flashed into her mind that, ruined and disgraced, he had killed himself.

“He hasn’t done himself any——”

“Certainly not, but at the close of the Coffee Exchange to-day—he had been carrying on a big deal, you know——”

Ah, too well she knew it.

“He collapsed, and——”

“Where is he?”

“They are bringing him home. The doctor says it was the nervous strain of the last two months which has culminated in this breakdown. It is nothing serious, I beg to assure you. He will be all right, with rest and freedom from care and anxiety.”

Rest he could get, thought the woman, but freedom from care and anxiety—never! Stop! Where could he get rest? They would be poor, they would have nothing left. Bertie had said every dollar was gone unless the corner could be broken. Perhaps—but Smith-Pogis was speaking again.

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“ You know, of course, that corner—— ”

“ I know all about it, Mr. Smith-Pogis. Bertie told me to-day. I believe we have lost everything, but my courage—— ”

“ Lost! By Jove, no! You’ve won.”

“ What! ” exclaimed the woman.

The man was certainly mad.

“ You’ve won, I say. Really, you know. What do you call it? Busted the corner, cleaned up everything in the last two hours. There has never been such a scene on the Coffee Exchange. Everybody went crazy. Just when they thought the corner was made the break came. Nobody knew how or why. The fellows on the other side, the bears, you know, took advantage of it, and everything went whirling down. You stand to win millions, Miss Livingstone. I congratulate you, don’t you know.”

“ How did you know I was in it? ”

“ Bertie told me.”

“ Did he tell you anything else? ” asked Miss Livingstone, swiftly.

Mr. Smith-Pogis Brings the News

The Englishman hesitated. He was loath to lie. He wasn't used to it. When he did he did it clumsily.

“Stop!” cried the woman, her face scarlet with shame, quickly divining the truth. “I see you know.”

He could only bow and wish he could sink through the floor in the face of her accusing gaze.

“Did you tell any one?”

“Only one man.”

“And why he?”

“I had to. I——”

“Who was it?”

“I promised not to tell.”

“I suppose the facts will soon be public property,” returned Miss Livingstone, with a bitter sigh.

“No. That man won't tell, I'm sure.”

“Mr. Smith-Pogis, how was that corner broken?”

He tried another lie, like the gentleman he was, and failed again.

“I know,” she cried, interrupting him. “You broke it yourself. You were on the other side, I

The Corner in Coffee

remember. A bull. 'You threw your holdings on the market. Oh, Mr. Smith-Pogis——'"

"No, I held on," said that youngster; "I didn't —ah—quit the—er—game, you know. Not such a cad, by Jove."

"How much did you lose?"

"Oh, come now, really——"

"I insist upon knowing."

"Well, I—I haven't figured it up yet. I suppose I lost pretty much all I had in. It wasn't much. The governor can stand it. He's got plenty, you know. I did sell after a while."

"What did you do it for?"

"I—I—for—I wanted to get as much back as I could, you know, when I saw the market going down, and——"

"Mr. Smith-Pogis, you have told three of the most lovely and honorable lies I ever listened to. I know why you sold just when things were coming your way. Did you do it for Bertie and me?"

"Not for Bertie," he whispered.

Mr. Smith-Pogis Brings the News

The woman took his hand.

“ You are a brave and noble gentleman,” she said. “ I wish I could give you the answer you deserve to your question, but I am afraid I cannot. I am ashamed. I treated your wooing as a jest, and now I am punished.”

“ Don’t, Miss Livingstone,” said the young man. “ I’m proud to have known you. Happy to be permitted to be your friend. Of course, I’m dreadfully cut up, and all that, you know, but I knew how it would be. I’m a duffer at everything——”

“ Except in being one of the truest, noblest gentlemen I ever knew,” answered the woman.

“ But there is another——” began the Honorable Reginald, excitedly, and then, remembering his promise given that morning, he stopped.

“ Yes, yes, go on. One other who——”

“ I can’t, really, don’t you know. I’d like to tell, but——”

“ One question, Mr. Smith-Pogis. Mr. Tillotson was on your side, too? ”

The Corner in Coffee

The Englishman opened wide his eyes in astonishment.

“ You needn’t say anything about it. I learned this from Bertie myself. What I want to know is, does he know about Bertie ? ”

“ Really, Miss Livingstone—— ”

“ That is enough. Did you tell him ? ”

The Englishman was in agony. He stared at her speechless, cudgelling his brain to get some answer that would serve the purpose.

“ Did he break that corner ? ” went on the woman, relentlessly. “ As you did, for me ? It was his corner, was it not ? Ah, I know. Do not tell another untruth, Mr. Smith-Pogis.”

There was a noise in the street; any diversion was welcome.

“ Here is the carriage with Bertie,” he cried, rushing to the window, happy at being permitted to escape.

“ Connie,” said her brother, weakly, as he was assisted up the steps into the hall, “ it’s all right.

Mr. Smith-Pogis Brings the News

We busted the corner. That damned—hound—Tillottson—is ruined. Your securities—safe. We've doubled all we—had—I don't know—the profits."

He sank down in the great chair in the hall and leaned against the table. He was still weak from the dreadful battle he had waged, the terrible struggle he had undergone, and he spoke brokenly, not at all master of himself.

"What, you here, Smith-Pogis?" he rambled on, observing the other man for the first time. "You were in the wreck--on the other side—cleaned out. Why didn't—you follow—my lead?"

Smith-Pogis bit his lip to keep from curling it in contempt before Miss Livingstone, and turned away.

"You must be put to bed, Bertie, at once," said his sister, intervening to check a scene which was both horrible and painful at the same time.

CHAPTER XV

COLONEL JOHNSTONE ESSAYS HYMEN'S PART

Later in the same evening Miss Livingstone had another caller.

“There is a man down-stairs, Miss Livingstone,” said the footman. “He says his name is Colonel Pinckney Tolliver Johnstone, and he wants to see you.”

“I know no Colonel Johnstone,” answered Miss Livingstone, wearily. She had been so tried by the events of the day that she felt unequal to seeing anybody, unless it was a positive necessity. “Ask him his business.”

“He says he comes from Mr. Tillottson, miss,” said the man, returning after further interview with Johnstone.

“What sort of a person is he?”

Colonel Johnstone Essays Hymen's Part

“Very extraordinary-looking, miss, but—er—masterful,” answered the servant.

“Take him into the library. Tell him I’ll see him at once.”

“Whoopee!” exclaimed Colonel Johnstone, as Miss Livingstone swept into the room. “Excuse an old man, ma’am, but you’re suttainly wuth it!”

His words were strange, his manner more so, but there beamed such a kindly, intelligent look in his eyes that the woman took no offence. She realized that he was probably one of Tillottson’s former companions, and that he meant well.

“I am glad you are pleased, sir,” she said, smiling faintly. “The compliment is sincere, if direct.”

“You bet your life it is, ma’am,” said Johnstone. “Well, ma’am, our coffee corner is busted.”

“I know. I learned it some time ago.”

“My pardner is ruined.”

“Did he send you to tell me that?”

“Now, Miss Livingstone, that’s a low down deal—you’ll excuse me. You don’t know Ed Tillottson

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like me, or you'd know that he ain't never the kind to squeal when a deal goes agin him."

"I am ashamed," said the woman, contritely. "I should have known."

"Him and me has been pardners for nigh on to twenty years, and I'm plumb certain that if he knowed I was here a-tellin' you what I am he'd shoot me in a minute. He would, sure. No, sirree —ma'am, I mean—Tillottson reckons to pull his freight fer Brazil day after to-morrow. He's plumb cleaned out. He played the hand fer all it was wuth, and lost. And he's game, all right. He ain't sayin' nuthin'. But that man's hard hit, he is."

"Why do you tell me this, Colonel Johnstone?"

"Because he's in love with you, ma'am. He ain't goin' to tell you hisself——"

"Isn't he coming to see me?"

"He said no, but he'd write to you."

"Write! But he has a decision to get, to-morrow."

"I reckon he thinks he's got it, all right. No,

Colonel Johnstone Essays Hymen's Part

ma'am, Ed takes his medicine like a man. I jest thought you'd ought to know about it."

"I do know."

"But you don't know everything."

"I do."

"Did that English maverick tell you?"

"He did not."

"I didn't think he would. I knowed he was a gent, all right, if he is sech an ass. Who did tell you?"

"Nobody."

"Well, what do you know, and how do you know it, then?"

"I have not known Mr. Tillottson for twenty years, as you have, Colonel Johnstone, but I have found out enough about him in my short acquaintance to know what he would do. He learned in some way that my fortune was involved in this coffee deal—I hope he does not believe it was with my consent?"

"He knows all about that, miss."

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“Do you know it?”

“In course, bein’ in the deal, but nobody else, ‘ceptin’ me and him and the Englishman’ll ever know about it unless the maverick tells, w’ich I think he’s safe not to.”

The proud woman turned away her head in a sudden access of shame. Her brother’s embezzlement seemed to be common property in truth, now.

“Were you in the deal, too?” she asked, at last.

“I’m in all Ed’s deals, and he’s in mine. I was reckonin’ to be his best man at this yere weddin’; if it took place, I mean.”

“How much money did Mr. Tillottson have in this corner?”

“Every rap. But that’s all right.”

“And you?”

“The same. Don’t mind about me. I never did have so much fun as I had yesterday, in fact, all this month. It’s Ed I’m thinkin’ about.”

“Why do you call him ‘Ed’?” asked the woman, curiously. “His name is ‘Elijah.’”

Colonel Johnstone Essays Hymen's Part

“He didn’t like that name, nor ‘Draco,’ neither. He signs his name ‘E. D.,’ so we allus calls him ‘Ed.’”

“Well, Mr. Tillottson broke that corner himself to save me.”

“Yes, ma’am; he done jest that thing.”

“And lost all his money?”

“Sure did.”

“And you, too?”

“That’s about the size of it.”

For one fleeting moment Miss Livingstone thought of offering to reimburse old Johnstone for his loss. One glance, however, at his face warned her that the proposition would be considered an insult.

“Mr. Tillottson acted very nobly,” she said.

“He’s in love with you.”

“But you? You were not in love with me!”

“If I’d a-seen you before,” answered the man, promptly, “I’d have been.”

“Why did you sacrifice your fortune?”

“What’s mine’s Ed’s, and what’s Ed’s mine, I

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reckon. 'Ceptin' in wives—that is, if he gits one."

"Colonel Johnstone," said the woman, resolutely, "if he wants one, if he wants me—that is, he gets one."

"Gee whillikens!" whistled the old man, "that's the talk! I said when I come in you was wuth the game. But how air you goin' to fix things? That man Tillottson is the proudest man under the sun. Now that he has failed he'll never ax you agin."

"Won't he?" smiled Miss Livingstone at her aged interlocutor. "Will you send him up here?"

"You can't git him up here, I'm afeered."

"Will I have to go for him?"

"I think if you was to write him a letter—tell him you was in great trouble, he'd come hisself. He'd do anythin' to help you."

"I know he would," said Miss Livingstone, softly. "Will you take a note if I write it?"

"Not me! He'd want to know w'ere I got it,

Colonel Johnstone Essays Hymen's Part

and wot I was doin' up here. Just send it down by one of your peons——”

“One of my—oh, yes, I know. Where does he live?”

Johnstone gave her his address, and, having completed his errand thereby, rose to go.

“I wish,” she said, giving him her hand, “there was something I could do to show my appreciation of your kindness.”

“Well, if you make Ed happy I'll be satisfied.”

“You shall be best man at the wedding,” she answered, smiling confidently, “if there is one.”

CHAPTER XVI

MISS LIVINGSTONE CORNERS MR. TILLOTTSON

The first day of the new year dawned beautifully. The storm was over, and the air was clear, bracing and cold. Yet Tillottson got out of bed with a heavy heart. He had had a long, sleepless night to think over the situation, and the more he considered it the more miserable he became. He didn't repine over the loss of the money, either, but of the woman.

Colonel Johnstone, who ought to have felt worse, for he had no love to sustain him, was unusually cheerful; so much so that his superabundant spirits jarred roughly on his companion's present mood, and he spoke to him sharply; to all of which the elder turned a deaf ear, only emitting a series of irritating chuckles.

"Happy New Year," he said, "and here's something for you, I'll bet," he added, as there was a

Miss Livingstone Corners Mr. Tillottson

knock on the door. “A letter! Feemale woman’s writin’ on it, too, if I can jedge of the tender sex.”

“Give it to me,” cried Tillottson, with all the eagerness of a boy.

The Colonel held him off for a little space while he pretended to examine it carefully.

“Johnstone,” said Tillottson, impatiently, “I’m in no mood for trifling to-day. I’m that riled and nervous——”

“Here’s your letter, sonny,” said the other, handing it to him, “and much good may it do you.”

Tillottson had never seen Miss Livingstone’s handwriting, but he recognized the Livingstone arms, and he tore it open furiously.

“Miss Livingstone wants my help, Johnstone,” he said. “Listen.”

“Miss Livingstone is in great trouble,’ so he read, ‘and she begs Mr. Tillottson to come to her assistance so soon as he receives this. Miss Livingstone will be at home during the morning, and she will expect Mr. Tillottson immediately. He has

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proffered her his friendship and counsel, and she needs it greatly now.' ”

“ I’m going at once,” he cried.

“ Better git some breakfast fust. You kin do your duty better on a full meal,” said Johnstone, with a fine eye to the material things of life.

There had been no great bunch of American Beauty roses sent to Miss Livingstone that morning. Tillottson was too poor to afford another bunch, it seemed. Nor was the usual box of Parma violets left at her door. She was fain to fall back upon the carnations of the faithful Honorable Reginald. The Honorable Reginald, she learned from a note enclosed, had suddenly sailed for England that morning. She had heard nothing whatever from Mr. Cutter. Indeed, only the failure of the violets caused her to remember the existence of the poor man.

If she had read the morning papers, however, she would have seen an account of his ruin and self-destruction. He had procured some cartridges for

Miss Livingstone Corners Mr. Tillottson

Tillottson's pistol, and had blown his brains out in his office that night, leaving a brief note in which he announced his defalcations and failure.

The great corner in coffee had ruined Tillottson, it had beggared Bertie Livingstone of his honor, and it had brought Cutter to the grave of a suicide. There were hundreds of lesser operators with their innocent dependants who suffered in varying degrees as well.

But if Miss Livingstone lacked flowers she was a blossom herself that morning. Passion and hope had given her back her youth. A color like that of a girl pulsed in her cheek. Her heart throbbed as might that of a girl expectant of a first love. None of that, however, did Mr. Tillottson realize when she stood before him in the library.

“ You sent for me, Miss Livingstone,” he said, bowing profoundly.

He was irreproachably dressed as usual, and his anxiety and regret, not for what he had done, but for what he was to lose, had added refining touches

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to his handsome face. He had lost some of his assurance, but had gained in other directions. As the conversation progressed she noticed he spoke more slowly and with painstaking care. His mind was naturally a brilliant one, and he had spent the larger part of the two months that had elapsed since she wished him good luck in that very room, in the hardest kind of study under competent teachers; trying to perfect himself in grammar and in the other adornments of speech, adding refining touches to the solid learning and ability which were already his own. And it was rare indeed that he forgot himself. She was surprised to find him definitely improved, although such was the state of her regard for him that she would probably have arrived at the same conclusion if he had deteriorated since she had seen him.

“Mr. Tillottson—” she began, then she hesitated.

“You said you were in trouble, and wanted my help,” he said, formally, although she noticed his hand was trembling like an aspen leaf under the

Miss Livingstone Corners Mr. Tillottson

restraint he strove to put upon himself. "I am afraid I can be of little assistance, but whatever I can do for you I am most anxious to do, Miss Livingstone."

"I know that, but—" She hesitated again, looking away. "You know what day this is, Mr. Tillottson?" she asked, softly, so softly, in fact, that he could scarcely hear her.

"The first of January," he replied, his voice quivering as he thought how he had looked forward to this day, and what it might have meant to him.

"You were to—ask—there was to be—a—decision."

"I cannot ask it now, Miss Livingstone. I set myself a task, and failed."

"What was your task?"

"That corner in coffee, you know."

"Oh!" she said, vaguely, "the corner in coffee?"

"Didn't you know about it, Miss Livingstone?" he said, looking directly at her.

"Yes, but—"

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“No matter. I failed. That’s all. Instead of the ten million dollars I hoped to have to match your fortune, I have nothing. I can offer you nothing. There’s nothing for me to do but thank God I met you, wish you good luck—and go.”

“You forget, Mr. Tillottson, that I need your help.”

“I shall be glad to help you, in any way, if you will tell me what to do. My feelings——”

“They haven’t changed, Mr. Tillottson?”

“Yes, they have.”

“What!” cried the woman, anxiously, leaning forward and looking at him with alarm and apprehension in her eyes, which, strive as she would, she could not suppress.

“It won’t do you any harm to know, now that it is all over,” he explained. “I loved you before; I worship you now. That’s the change. The only change there will ever be in me. I shall love you more and more as long as I live. But all this is past, Miss Livingstone. It doesn’t interest you now.

Miss Livingstone Corners Mr. Tillottson

We'll say no more about it. I've played to win and lost, though no man ever had such a stake as mine before, and I want you to know that I'm a good loser. What is your trouble?"

"I am a most miserable and unhappy woman, and I—you say—you do not wish the answer to that—question?"

"Wish it, Miss Livingstone? I'm crazy to—no, no, you're right. There is no answer to be given."

"Well, then, since you don't require an answer—"

"What then?"

"And since there is nothing between us—"

"Nothing?"

"I'll tell you my trouble. You see— But I am afraid I can't ask you—"

"Miss Livingstone, how can I help you? Ask me anything."

"I think I will confide in you, then. Since you are sure you won't mind and all is over between us."

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She turned away, but he could see the color flooding her cheek.

“I am in love,” she whispered, so softly that her words were scarcely audible to him.

“I suppose so,” he muttered, under his breath. At the same time his hand stole to his heart and he clenched his teeth.

“And the man I love loves me.”

“Of course. Why don’t you marry him, then?” he gasped out, at last.

“He doesn’t want me to marry him; there is something between us.”

“Good God, Miss Livingstone,” he replied, “has he a wife? Have you given your affections to some blackguard? If so, I’ll shoot him——”

“No, no,” cried the woman. “I wouldn’t have a hair of his head harmed. He is——”

“What?”

“The truest, noblest gentleman I know. It isn’t that that comes between us.”

“What is it? Is it anything I can remove?”

Miss Livingstone Corners Mr. Tillottson

asked the little man, nerving himself for the next thing in this dreadful interview which was a thousand times harder to bear than the breaking of the corner.

“It’s money,” she said.

“Oh, then I can’t help you,” regretfully.

“Haven’t you any money?”

“Not a cent. Why didn’t you speak to me yesterday?”

“It’s my money that comes between us. He is poor and he will not take it—even with me. If he’d only say the word, I could persuade him. But he won’t speak—like you,” she added, in the faintest of whispers.

“I wouldn’t let money differences stand between you and your lover, Miss Livingstone. Speak to him yourself.”

The strain upon Tillottson was harrowing. How could any woman be so cruel to a man who loved her as he, as to force him to listen to her pleading for another’s man’s love? She wished his

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help. Well, she should have it, if it broke his heart.

“Go to him,” he said, making a superhuman effort to control himself and speak calmly; “tell him the truth. It isn’t conventional, I know. The woman has to wait for the man to propose, I believe. But I am an unconventional man. We people who live on the frontier usually are. If I were you, I’d go to him and tell him everything. There is nothing higher than love between man and woman, and money is a mere circumstance. What he had would be yours, and yours his.”

“I am telling him, Mr. Tillottson.”

“Miss Livingstone!”

“I am telling him,” she whispered, flashing a glance at him that illuminated him like the sun bursting through the clouds on a wintry morning.

“My God!” he cried, sinking back in the chair and staring at her, “do you mean me? It can’t——”

“I love you, Mr. Tillottson. See——”

Miss Livingstone Corners Mr. Tillottson

She rose, stood hesitant, poised before him, then sank to her knees, reaching out her hands to him.

“I love you,” she whispered, bravely, her eyes swimming, her cheeks flaming. “Will you marry me? Will you take me, money and all?”

She leaned toward him. It was not in mortal man to resist, yet he strove to do so. He drew back.

“I can’t,” he murmured, hoarsely. “I can’t.”

But she would not be denied. Her head was on his breast now, and for the first time her lips met his own. His arm stole about her. He pressed her to his heart with all the passion in his soul. He kissed her again and again. He was mad, delirious, with the unexpected happiness of that moment. Had she conquered?

“I can’t,” he murmured, after a little pause.

“You can—you shall—the money is yours. Yesterday night I was a beggar but for you. I know everything. You broke your own corner for me, for me! You did this that my money might be saved. Would you break my heart now? Hush!”

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she cried, putting her hand on his lips, "not a word! I won't receive a dollar of this money unless you come with it! If there is no other way I will come to you in the clothes in which I stand, and nothing else. Love is above money. You said so yourself. I loved you, I think, from the minute you first appeared. I am an old woman——"

He threw back his head and laughed.

"—but I feel in this instance as any other woman might——"

"Say 'girl,' sweetheart."

"As any other girl might feel," she complied, "but I wasn't honest with myself. I fought against it in my heart. I wouldn't admit it until yesterday, when I learned my money was gone. Then I thought you would not come to me when you had lost your money. And I said I would not marry you if I lost mine. Now it is different. Do you know if you had come to me with your money, or without it, I could not have refused you? I cannot help loving you. Nothing, nothing, shall part us!"

Miss Livingstone Corners Mr. Tillottson

Money is nothing. You have said it. Love is all!"

She flashed such a look at him through teary lashes that he pressed her to his breast again.

"Who told you?" he asked, at last. "It wasn't that Englishman, was it?"

"No."

"He's a gentleman."

"Yes."

"How did you learn it?"

"My heart told me first, then your friend, Colonel Johnstone."

"The old rascal! God bless him!"

"And so say I," added the woman, nestling against him. "But you have not accepted me. Will you take me? See, I am on my knees begging you."

"I will, so help me God!" He rose as he spoke and lifted her up with him.

"Money and all?" she asked.

"I suppose so. That goes with you, I guess, and I'll have to make the best of it—Constance,"

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“Elijah!” said the woman.

It was a homely, unromantic name.

She had thought she could never get used to it, but when she spoke it bravely he thought it was the sweetest appellation that ever fell from a woman's lips.

CHAPTER XVII

MR. BERTIE LIVINGSTONE PAYS FOR HIS FUN

“Elijah!” called out an unsteady yet decidedly contemptuous voice, also a highly surprised one.

Mr. Bertie Livingstone, who had arisen that morning in defiance of the doctor’s orders, had just entered the library intent upon figuring his gains of the day before. He was attired in a luxurious dressing robe, whose brilliant and varied color only served to show forth his extraordinary pallor; as the trembling hand which he stretched menacingly toward the blissful pair indicated his weakness. He had not yet recovered from the awful strain of his mental and moral debauch on the Coffee Exchange, it was quite evident.

“That’s my name, sir,” answered Tillottson, sharply, releasing Constance as he spoke, “but I

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know of no authority given you to use it in that familiar manner.”

“Well, by Jove!” exclaimed the other, “I don’t want to use it, familiarly or any other way. I merely repeated Miss Livingstone’s remark. I said once before, you will remember, that if you ever came here I would have you kicked out of the house. Now I propose to do it.”

He reached his trembling hand toward an electric button near the door.

“Do not press that button, Bertram,” cried Miss Livingstone sharply.

He could never remember her calling him “Bertram” before and he stopped in surprise.

“Why not?” he asked.

There was something in her appearance as he turned toward her which gave him pause.

“Because I am going to marry Mr. Tillottson.”

“I’ll turn you both out!” said Bertie angrily, after he had grasped this astonishing disclosure, stretching his hand again toward the button. “The

Mr. Bertie Livingstone Pays for His Fun

man's a pauper! I said once before that he was a fortune-hunter. I believe he did have some money at that time, but he's lost it. Lost every dollar of it, I tell you! He fought against me, I crushed him! If you are going to marry the beggar, go outside and do it!"

Bertie was hardly master of himself, mentally, as yet; and when Tillottson broke away from Constance's detaining hand and grabbed him by the shoulder, although the younger man was half again as big as he, and sat him down in the arm-chair as if he had been a child, then Bertie realized that he was not physically master of himself either.

"Sit down there!" said Tillottson, wrathfully, "you—" and then, in deference to his sweetheart, he stopped. "Listen to what your sister has to say to you."

"This is outrageous!" cried Bertie, weakly but wrathfully; "I'll have the law on you! It's assault! You're a witness, Constance! I am not myself. I have no strength, or I—"

The Corner in Coffee

“I would put you down in that chair if you were ten feet high and weighed a thousand pounds!” said Tillottson, with justifiable extravagance.

“I should think, Bertram,” interrupted Miss Livingstone, calmly, her voice and manner as cold as ice, “that the law is the last thing that you would wish to evoke.”

The young man writhed under this cutting remark.

“I don’t know what you mean,” he muttered.

“Yes, you do, and Mr. Tillottson knows it, too. He’s willing to take me, the sister of a dishonored man——”

“Stop, stop!” cried Tillottson.

“It isn’t at all a question of money with him,” continued the woman swiftly; “yesterday afternoon you were a ruined man, you told me so. Ruined in fortune, beggared in honor. Oh, he knows,” she went on, as her brother started to his feet protesting, “Mr. Smith-Pogis told him.”

“Does anybody else know?”

Mr. Bertie Livingstone Pays for His Fun

“Only my partner, Colonel Johnstone,” interrupted Tillottson.

“No, but the whole world shall know,” said his sister sternly, “if you don’t behave yourself and do just as I say. I am of full age. I don’t care whether you consent to my marriage or not. You can’t put me out of this house, either; it’s as much mine as it is yours. Let that pass. I am going to marry Mr. Tillottson. I asked him to marry me. He was so little of a fortune-hunter that when he found out that his money was gone he was going back to Brazil without a word.”

“I wish to God he had!” snarled Bertie under his breath.

“But now he will stay here, or if he will go, I shall of course go with him. I am going to divide my money with him. I shall make him take all that was made for me out of that deal.”

“Constance, you’re a fool!”

“Better be a fool than my brother,” answered the woman with spirit, “but you are not yourself.

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I disregard your insulting remarks. You don't know what you are talking about."

"The man that could break a corner like that yesterday not know what he's talking about!" exclaimed Bertie.

"You didn't break it," said his sister.

"Who did, then?"

"I did," answered Tillottson, quietly.

"You? Preposterous!"

"I did it nevertheless."

"What for?"

"To save your sister's fortune. To have carried out that corner would have ruined you and made me, but it would have ruined her. I could not do that, you know."

"You're a fool too!" sneered Bertie, to cover his discomfiture at this startling information. "I don't believe it anyway," he added stubbornly.

"You may believe it or not, just as you please," returned Tillottson, indifferently. "I'm only sorry that in sparing her I had to spare you too."

Mr. Bertie Livingstone Pays for His Fun

“All that he says is true,” broke in Miss Livingstone at this juncture.

“You have only his word for it, Constance.”

“It’s enough for me,” said his sister. “But it happens I have other evidence. Mr. Smith-Pogis——”

“Another fool!” interrupted Bertie.

“Maybe, but a gentleman.”

“Suppose you stop throwing that epithet around so careless like,” growled Tillottson; “we’ve had enough of it.”

“Well,” said Bertie, rising unsteadily to his feet, “as you say, Constance, you are of full age. Thirty-five, I believe,” he laughed, with malicious mockery, in a way that made the engineer long to kill him.

“Mr. Tillottson has known that fact since the night he did me the honor to offer me his hand,” returned the woman quickly, although her color deepened at her brother’s evident intent to shame her.

“Miss Constance,” said Tillottson, pleadingly,

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“just leave him to me for a few minutes. I’ll straighten him out.”

“It’s not necessary,” returned the woman, smiling at him. “Besides, I’m not done with him yet. Sit down again, Bertram!”

“Anything more? I should have thought the possession of Tillottson would have satisfied you.”

“It has, but there is one thing more I want.”

“What is that?”

“Your signature to this agreement, which I prepared last night.”

She lifted a paper from the desk and handed it to him.

“What is it?” He hastily scanned it. “Great God, ten millions! I won’t do it!”

“Yes, you will.”

“It will make me a pauper!”

“You will have five millions left, just the sum our father left you.”

“It’s madness; I tell you I won’t do it! Give ten millions to a—a—blasted orphan asylum!”

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“I am not particular about the orphan asylum, but all that you made out of that deal goes to charity.”

“I won’t, I say!”

“You must!” firmly.

“Why must?” in furious anger.

“You must do it or be published for what you are.”

“What I am?”

“Yes,” went on Miss Livingstone inflexibly; “shall I say the word?”

“Don’t!” cried the wretched man, almost collapsing in the chair before the desk; was he to stake everything, including honor, and gain nothing?

“Don’t take it so hard, Livingstone,” said Tilottson, a little pity for the man before him in his heart—after all, he was her brother—“since Miss Livingstone insists upon making over her share of the profits to me, I’ll just add it to your pile and let the whole thing go in the charity line. I won’t even reserve for myself my own original stake. That

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can go too. I can make a living anywhere," he added, looking back at Constance, "with you and for you."

"Constance," groaned the unhappy Bertie, "you don't really mean this?"

"I do, as I live!" said his sister. "You know me; you know I am not given to rash statements. It's blood money and shame money. You have ruined hundreds of people by your operations. I don't know any way to make restitution. I know it's impossible to give it back to your victims, but no dollar of it shall you or any of us enjoy. It must and shall go to charity! That's all. Now you will sign. Indeed you must, or you shall not have one scrap of reputation left."

"You wouldn't publish your own shame!"

"It is not my shame, and people would honor me for doing it. Sign! Now, Mr. Tillottson, will you witness this document? You can go now, Bertram."

"My God!" gasped Bertie, with a venomous

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glare at Tillottson. "This is your doing! I could kill you where you stand!"

"My darling," said Tillottson, as the wretched man left them alone, "you're the finest woman in the world!"

"Do you approve of what I did?"

"I approve of everything you do and always shall," asserted her lover, proceeding to give her unmistakable evidence as to his sincerity.

CHAPTER XVIII

COLONEL JOHNSTONE IS BEST MAN AFTER ALL

To them entered impetuously Colonel Johnstone, in spite of the frantic efforts of the appalled servant to prevent him. He had a telegram in his hand.

His keen eye took in the agitated couple of fifty and thirty-five, and certainly, this time at least, neither of them looked their years. He saw the happiness radiating from Tillottson's face. He marked the color in Miss Livingstone's cheeks, the sparkle in her eyes. He was even keen enough to notice her tousled, tumbled hair—bewitching disorder that it was! He could tell what had been going on.

“Well, I see you've concluded to jine.”

“You old reprobate!” said Tillottson. “What did you tell her for?”



“ Well, I see you've concluded to jine.” — *Page 264.*

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“I thought I’d ought to. Ain’t you obleeged to me?”

“I am. Still, you should not have done it.”

“No; I s’pose not.”

“I told you, Colonel Johnstone,” interrupted the charming Miss Livingstone, at this juncture, “that you could be best man at the——”

“At the jinin’? You bet your socks, I’ll be! I reckoned on that ever sense I seed you yesterday night.”

“What have you there?” asked Tillottson.

“I’ve jest got a telegram from Lopez, and he says the mine is all right. They’ve struck good pay ore, their claims is located, and you kin capitalize her, if you want. You’re a millionaire again.”

“And you won’t be poor?” said Miss Livingstone in dismay. “You won’t take my money?”

“Johnstone,” said Tillottson, who was in a mood to give away everything on earth so long as he kept Miss Livingstone, “I’ll make it over to you. I’ll have enough here, with my wife, for any reasonable

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man. You can have my share of the mine for your share of the deal.”

“Well, I’m dumbed!” cried the Colonel. “I’ll give it to your bride, Ed, for a weddin’ present.”

“I won’t take it,” cried Miss Livingstone, promptly. “I have my own fortune and—Elijah—and that’s enough.”

“Elijah!” exclaimed Johnstone, growing very red in the face and then bursting into hearty laughter, in which the other two joined.

It is of record that Miss De Kaater relented sufficiently to go to the wedding, after all; especially when she learned that it was inevitable, and after she was told how chivalrously Tillottson had behaved. Colonel Pinckney Tolliver Johnstone, too, was much impressed with her dignified and patrician air, and they do say—but that would be impossible, surely!

AN EARLIER EPISODE IN THE LIFE
OF MR. TILLOTTSON

AN EARLIER EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF MR. TILLOTTSON*

*In which Mr. Jones-Todd narrates the manner of
Mr. Tillottson's introduction into New
York's most Exclusive Society.*

Having finished the business of the afternoon sooner than I had anticipated, and having dressed for dinner at the office, I found myself at the hotel where we were stopping while the decorators were in our house, in upper Fifth avenue, a half hour earlier than the time appointed by my wife for dinner. She had arranged to come directly to the grand foyer of the hotel from a reception or afternoon tea, or some other feminine function, and I was to meet her near the entrance of the Fifth avenue dining room.

* By courtesy of the *New York Herald*, holders of the copyright, under the title, "The Lovers of Lolita."

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The passing show was well worth inspection. Indeed, before my wife and I had become quite so used to it, when we were newcomers in New York, we had often gone down there in the evening for the sole purpose of observing the dress parade. It was as good as a theatre—and if you took dinner there not nearly so cheap. The women were all beautifully gowned in the smartest of frocks, and the attendant men were sufficiently submissive to follow unobtrusively *en train*; sometimes, the awkward ones, *on train!* The men never attracted much attention anyway. They were as unconsidered as bridegrooms at weddings. They were monotonously alike in their evening clothes, and the attempt to distinguish them from the occasional waiters who strayed out into the corridor was too severe a mental strain for idleness. On this evening, however, much to my surprise, my interest was excited by a mere man, who sat across the corridor from me.

He was a little man, with white hair, a white mustache and imperial, but with an erect figure and

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keen blue eyes, which belied the other evidences of age. He looked a little foreign and very lonesome. Nobody spoke to him or noticed him, of course, although he surveyed the passing throng with what seemed to me to be a glance of expectancy, hope deferred, and appeal. Finally his gaze rested on me. He studied me unobtrusively for a few moments. I was not born in New York, and he seemed to divine that fact, for, after some hesitation, he arose, crossed the hall and nodded toward a vacant chair by my side with a mutely interrogative glance, remarking in a pleasant, if uncultured voice:—

“Stranger, may I set down here?”

“Certainly,” I replied.

“You ain’t a New Yorker, are you?”

“I am not a native of New York,” I said.

For that matter I have learned by inquiries that nobody in particular is ever born in New York, although everybody who is anybody comes here in time if he can.

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“I thought not. You look kind o’ sociable, an’ as I got tired of playin’ a lone hand over there I thought I might venture. My name is Tillottson, Elijah D. Tillottson.”

I mentioned my own, and so the acquaintance began.

“You were lonesome, were you?” I asked.

“Lonesome! God A’mighty, I ain’t never seen nuthin’ like it! I’ve been alone in a small boat on the sea; I’ve been the only human bein’, as fer as I knew, fer hundreds of miles on the prairie; I’ve stood on mountain tops with no companion, as fer as I could see, but that kind o’ lonesomeness ain’t nuthin’ to what I felt right here in this crowd. A man on the train told me to come here. It was the best an’ biggest hotel in the town. He said it was a place where a Western man could be at rest an’ feel at home. There was so many on ‘em here. He said the masses could be exclusive here, too; an’, though I ain’t seen one Western man that I could pick out unless” (he looked at me)—

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“I plead guilty,” I remarked, “I was born west of the Mississippi.”

“I thought so! Put it there,” he said gleefully, his eyes sparkling as he extended his hand and shook mine vigorously, to the surprise of the passersby.

“You are from Mexico, you said?”

“Yes, but American born.”

“Oh, of course, I knew that.”

“Yes, we Americans don’t like to be taken fer peons, you can be sure o’ that.”

“I have some interests in Mexico,” I remarked.

“What was your business while there?”

“Railroadin’—contractin’, that is.”

“What do you think of the country?”

“Finest on earth! There’s more money to be made there than any place I know, an’ easier. I’ve made my little pile an’ am up here to enjoy it, but I doubt not I’ll go back again soon. It sort o’ fascinates you. If I can do anythin’ to help you in your business down there I’d be glad to do it.”

“Thank you,” I answered, smiling at the frank

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proposition, “perhaps I shall avail myself of your offer some day. The Mexican women, I understand, are beautiful?”—not that Mexican women had anything to do with my business!

“They sure are!” returned the other, “but they can’t hold a candle to our girls. The prettiest one I ever seen was Dolores Santivanez, little Lolita—she was a darlin’, sure! She very nearly done me up, though.”

“How was that?” I asked, scenting a story at once, and realizing that my friend only wanted encouragement to talk on.

“Well, sir, twenty years ago I was a good sight younger than I am now. I was fresh from the States when I went down there. My hair wasn’t white an’ I wasn’t a bad lookin’ young fellow, nuther. Bein’ a blond in them days I was some-thin’ of a contrast to the Mexican lot, an’ I used to have some pretty lively times with the girls. That is as lively a time as a man can have when he has to make love through a grate bar. You can imagine

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it is rather coolin' to a passion till you get used to it.

“ Well, as to Lolita—I think it was a little more serious in her case than other times. She was the first one, too. Stranger, she was so all-fired pretty an’ she sort o’ played into my hand as it was, that I got myself rather tangled up with her. It was down in Oaxaca. We was buildin’ the Oaxaca Railroad, an’ had the right of way from Teotitlan del Camino south. I had one hundred and twelve kilometres to construct with three camps of about two hundred men each on the line. Of course, as superintendent, I had to divide my time between the three camps an’ keep them all to work. Each camp was composed of four or five gangs of peons —common laborers, that is. Over each one was a gang boss, mostly not much above the level of the men. Over each camp and gang bosses there’d be a Mexican assistant superintendent. He had a good job, a bully one, fer he got big pay an’ reported only to me.

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The brightest gang boss in the camp near Teotitlan was Chon Villalobos, which his name was Encarnacion Villalobos. We called him 'Chon' for short. Chon was a cut above the ordinary boss, an' he had ambitions. If his industries had been proportioned to said ambitions he'd have been a great man, but he was a lazy cuss, a shirker, an' generally worthless. I found that out afterward. When I first came an' took charge, the former chief havin' been knocked out by the Yellow Jack, he was a-raisin' Cain, an' it looked like as if he was makin' things hum.

"Well, I told you my name was Elijah D. The 'D' stands fer Draco. He was some sort of a foreign gent—a lawyer, I take it—an' Elijah was a scriptural cuss. I never took much stock in lawyers, an' me an' the Scriptures, I regrets to say, ain't got no more'n a bowin' acquaintance. Therefore, both them names seemed awful inappropriate to me, an' they're all-fired ugly in the bargain, so I never told nobody what my real name was. Seein' my initials they got to callin' me Ed, an' I'm known down

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there to this day as "Ed,' an' even sign my checks that way down there, which it's rather confusin' when I git up here.

"One mornin' I was busy in the tent foolin' over my accounts, when I was knocked silly by a most tremendous discharge of fireworks, guns, skyrock-ets, an' shootin' crackers. I rushed out thinkin' there must be a mutiny or somethin', an' there was all the men of the camp gathered around my tent. The assistant superintendent by this time was almost done fer an' in bed or they'd never have been allowed to quit work fer a minute even. They was a-shoutin' an' blazin' away, an' raisin' hell generally, an' when I come out they busted into cheers an' yells as if they'd gone mad.

"'What the devil does this racket mean?' I shouted in Spanish.

"'It is the name day of our Chief,' answered a good-looking young fellow, steppin' forth an' bowin' with all the grace that even the commonest Mexican has.

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“‘What day is it?’ I asked.

“‘It is the Saint’s Day of the Chief,’ answered that good-looking young fellow—I learned afterward that his name was Encarnacion Villalobos, Chon, you know—bowin’ again.

“‘I’ve got no Saint’s Day,’ I answered. ‘I’m a Protestant.’

“‘Still you have a name, señor, an’ as this is your name day we have come here to do you honor,’ at which there was another outbreak of cheers and yells.

“‘What day is it in God’s name?’ I shouted.

“‘The day of San Eduardo el Rey Confesor.’

“‘An’ I’m a republican, too,’ I said, as it dawned on me that they were celebratin’ as my name day October 13, the feast of King Edward the Confessor, which I told you my name is Elijah.

“‘It’s all right,’ said Chon, ‘we joy with you.’

“‘Well,’ I replied, ‘suppose you cut out this celebratin’ an’ exercise your energy, of which you seem to have an unusual lot, in gettin’ the dirt into that

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fill over yonder. When I want a celebration of my name day I'll let you know.' ''

“Were you not rather ungracious?” I remarked.

“No. You might think so from your point of view, but if you want the respect of them peons you've got to keep 'em down. If I hadn't put up a stiff front they'd have knocked off work fer the day an' the road would have suffered. Before they went back, however, the spokesman ventured upon somethin' further.

“‘We're goin' to have a party,’ he said, ‘at the house of my father's compadre to-night.’

“A man's ‘compadre,’ you know, is a godfather to his child. I'm compadre to about a thousand Mexicans, fer I've stood godfather to as many children. It never seemed to make any difference to them that I was a heretic from their point of view.

“‘If the Chief,’ he continued, ‘would honor us——’

“I was mighty fond of a pretty face in them days, as I am even now, fer all my white hair, so I said I'd

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go. Well, after the day's work was done I rode with him to Teotitlan. I wouldn't have gone with a common peon, but I could see that he was better. I forgot to tell you that there was a number of little presents given me durin' the mornin', among them a beautiful bouquet of gardenias. Say, if you ain't never seen the Mexican gardenias you don't know what a flower is an' what perfume is nuther. They come, so Chon told me, from his cousin, Señorita Dolores Santivanez. He put in a clever word or two about her, an' it was with considerable curiosity I looked forward to meetin' the young lady. Chon told me as we rode down the trail that he was very anxious to be a camp boss. That he was engaged to a girl who promised to look favorably upon his courtin' when he showed himself a man an' got a job above the common peon. He didn't tell me who this girl was, or what she was an' I didn't care much. I wasn't in a condition to give the world much thought anyway after I had seen Dolores.

“Madre de Dios! Stranger, she was a beaut, and

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no mistake! Her hair was as black as a raven's wing, an' she had eyes to match, only soft an' languishin'—an' how she could use 'em! The color flamed in her olive cheek—her skin had a sort of copper tint on account of an ancestor not very far back who belonged to the Zapoteca tribe of Indians, native Mexicans, aborigines, you know, Toltecs, I think, an' all that sort of thing. I'll bet the feller would have belonged to the nobility of the country if he had lived in Cortez's time.

"I fell head over heels in love with that girl at the start, an' she didn't seem in no wise unwillin' to reciprocate. Such languishin' glances as she cast at me! By Jacks, I can remember 'em now! 'Taint in the power of men to forgit 'em. Introduced by Chon, who seemed to be a person of some consideration thereabouts, my footin' was secure, an' as I was the biggest gun fer miles around, no one interfered between me an' Lolita. Chon, as I said, was her cousin, an' he sort o' steered the rest of the men away. We had things pretty much to

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ourselves. We danced the danza together, an' the jarabe, a sort of Virginia reel, 'ceptin' you mark the time with a pleasant clatterin' of your feet. Great gosh, what a foot that girl had! Stranger, I reckon you could put them both in one hand an' hardly fill it nuther. She had on low shoes an' scarlet stockin's an' wore a short skirt that left a few inches of ankle in sight. Her dress was scarlet, too, as I remember, an' she wore a necklace made of one hundred American gold pieces. That's about the finest thing a Mexican of that class can wear. It's a sort of testimony to aristocracy an' respectability an' so on. She had a Madonna face, too, a long oval, you know, an' a pointed chin. She looked like one of—what's that feller's name?—Raphael's pictures. Her hair was parted in the middle like that French female that we used to see in pictures—de Mérode, I think that's what they call her; yes, sure.

“Well, it was a red hot case with me. I was tabasco sauce in love affairs in them days an' she mixed it up with me all right. When we didn't

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dance we set in one of the little alcoves, which is the only privacy you can get with a respectable Mexican girl, an' made love to each other. We didn't speak much about anythin' but ourselves until just before I went away, when Lolita had got fer enough to put in a word fer her cousin Chon, who she said was a noble feller, far above his station, an' was fit fer somethin' better'n a gang boss. She begged me to help him fer her sake. I promised, of course.

"I was just crazy in love with that girl. Every minute I could spare from business, an' some I hadn't oughter took, especially in the afternoons, I'd take a pasear down to her father's casa. I tried visitin' her in the American way, but that didn't work. States customs don't go in old Mexico. The old lady told me if I wanted to address her daughter I'd have to stay outside, as they do in that country. You know down there the girl stays in the house, only she comes to the winder, which is covered with big iron bars, an' the lover stays outside. They can be as private as they want to, 'ceptin', of course, anybody

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passin' can see the courtin'; but it grows mighty dark down there an' the girl takes care there's no one in the room an' the man takes care there's no one outside."

"I should think the bars would be rather difficult to make love through."

"Not a bit of it! It's rather romantic when it ain't rainin'. You can get your hands through an' if the lady is willin'—well, you can do considerable billin' an' cooin' all right."

"You know from experience, I suppose?"

"Well, I should say so!"

"And was Miss Dolores willing?"

"Willin'? She was more than willin'; she was anxious! We got along most famous. I was head over heels in love with that girl, as I told you, an' she was with me. I spouted poetry, an' flowers, an' sentiment, and such like. I had 'em on tap them days, an' she returned it. But she most generally had somethin' to say about Chon. I didn't like it much, but I promoted that feller when the boss died.

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He ought to have been happy, but he wasn't. It kind o' dawned on me that he didn't altogether approve of my love affair with Lolita. I began to suspicion that he loved her himself, an' once I caught him under her winder. I was goin' to raise Cain about it, but she smoothed me over an' I let it pass, but sort of kept a watch on him. One Saturday afternoon I discovered that he was tryin' to swindle the firm. There'd been a Saint's Day that week an' the gang hadn't worked that day. He turned in work tickets for the whole week, an' the paymaster was about to cash 'em when I interfered. I was so all-fired mad, after the way I had used him, when I found out the fraud, that I just told some of the boys to tie him to a tree outside an' leave him to reflect on his ways."

"That was rather severe, wasn't it?"

"No, it wasn't. You've got to treat them peons that way. They mistake kindness for weakness. I had a boy once, a servant to wait on me, my personal attendant, you know, an' he was so good, fer

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so little money, too, that one day in a streak of generosity I took him into town an' togged him out in a new rig, hat, suit of clothes—everything. By Jacks, that night he stole my valise an' all my jewelry an' money, an' lit out! He was evidently goin' to turn over a new leaf, take a fresh start an' live up to his clothes. You can't treat 'em too kindly.

I once had a friend named Hennessey, an' we was passin' a little house outside a village when we heard a fearful ruction. A woman screamed an' a man was yellin' like mad an' cursin' most awful. I was some ahead of Hennessey an' saw the woman pull a whole handful of whisker out of that feller's chin. Now, you know, that'd make any man mad, even the most peaceable kind, an' he grabbed up a barrel stave an' was a wallopin' that female right good, and she certainly deserved it.

“ ‘My God,’ sez Hennessey, ‘man, would you beat a woman.’ He was a chivalrous man, was Hennessey.

“ Not knowin’ the provocation, not havin’ seen

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the whole performance, he rushed between 'em an' bowled the man over with his fist. He was a handy man with his fist, was Hennessey, an' before I could interfere, what do you suppose that peon woman done? She picked up a quemal, which is a heavy earthen dish about a yard in diameter, concave in the centre, in which they bake tortillas. It was an old dish an' a little rotten, an' when she struck Hennessey over the head it just settled down on his neck, like a collar. He had a hard head, that Hennessey, an' he bust right through the middle of it, you know, an' while it hung there he turned it. Hennessey had a long neck, an' after he had turned that dish he couldn't get it off. The man got up an' went for poor Hennessey with the barrel stave, an' that woman who was dancin' around like mad, worse than before, was crying, 'Kill him! Kill him!'

I don't know what poor Hennessey would have done, fer he was as helpless as a child, if I hadn't interfered. I led him away from that billin' an' cooin' couple an' we went up the road a ways until

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I could git hold of a stone to break that earthen collar around the poor man's neck.

“‘Hennessey,’ said I, ‘you’d ought to meet Queen Elizabeth now.’

“‘What fer?’ he returned, mad like an’ cursin’ freely.

“‘Because you’ve got a ruff on your neck like Walter Raleigh.’

“‘Yes,’ groaned the man, ‘an’ it feels rougher than it looks.’

“I tell you chivalry don’t go in Mexico. But where was I?”

“You left Mr. Chon tied to a tree.”

“You’re righter than you know, stranger. That’s just what I done. I clean forgot that hound. I went away to see Lolita an’ left him tied up there, gnashin’ his teeth at his men standin’ round makin’ casual remarks not very pleasant fer him to hear. They would have profited by his fraud, but were too Spanish not to enjoy his punishment. He was foamin’ at the mouth, they told me afterward, an’

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would have liked to pull down that tree if he could. I just mentioned careless like to Dolores when I was leavin' that evenin' what I'd done. By Jacks, she turned on me like a tigress, stampin' her foot on the patio inside, an' screamed that she'd never speak to me again if I didn't instantly release Chon. I promised her, of course. I was beginnin' to get a little jealous of that feller, but I went back to camp an' turned him loose, an' he moseyed off somewhere an' got full of tequila an' aguardiente an' sich stuff an' came right back with blood in his eye an' fire in his breast. You know it takes about a dozen drinks to get a Mexican up to the point where he dare attack an American.

“It was evenin’, bright moonlight, an’ I was standin’ outside in front of my tent when Master Chon, seemin’ to drop from the clouds, suddenly appeared in front of me. Such cursin’ I never heard before, an’ before I realized what was up he began to peel his linen——”

“Peel his linen?” I asked interrogatively.

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“Yes, shuck his rags, you know. He wasn’t wearin’ nuthin’ much but a cotton shirt an’ a pair of cotton trousers rolled up above the knees. You see he was fixed for a fight. When I first looked at him he didn’t seem to have a weepin, an’ where he got the thing I never knew, but suddenly he made at me with a big machete. I’ve got it at home now. He sprang toward me, drew back his arm, an’ made one terrific sweep in my direction. The machete silvered in the moonlight an’ came toward me like a flash of lightin’. I jumped back as if I’d been shot out of a cannon, reachin’ fer my gun at the same time. We was so close together that the point of the big knife cut through every stitch of clothes an’ made a deep gash across my breast. I’ve got the scar yet.

Before he could do it again I had my gun out. I cocked it as I drew it. They didn’t have double action weepins in them days. I didn’t want to kill him, though I was mad enough to, so I struck him over the head this way, you know,” dropping his

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hand, "but in the excitement the gun went off, an' Chon fell to the ground, the blood streamin' all over his face, makin' him a horrible lookin' spectacle in the moonlight.

"Gosh, I was sorry. I thought I'd blowed what passed fer his brains clean out. It meant somethin' like to me. In the first place, when a man kills one of them rascally peons or any one down in Mexico, he is put in jail immejitly, not givin' him no chance to explain, an' they keep him there until he gets a trial, which it's sometimes years before that happens. The only thing fer me to do was to light out. I determined to do that at once. But I wasn't going alone. Dolores had told me a thousand times she loved me better than anybody an' anything, so I left word with my servant to saddle my horse, also to pick out another one an' put a woman's saddle on it, an' fetch them both after me, quick. Then I rushed down to her house. The casa was on the edge of the village, an' I'd ordered the man to lead the horses under the acacia trees to

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a spot I knew, which was some little outside the gate, and wasn't apt to be seen at that time of night.

"I made the usual signal under her winder, an' Lolita, who'd evidently been waitin', immejitly presented herself.

"'Have you released him, Don Eduardo?' she whispered.

"I can remember now how she looked that night, her eyes shinin' like stars out of the darkness, standin' at the winder, an' I stood outside lovin' her like a blanked fool.

"'Where is he?' she asked.

"'I believe I've killed him.'

"'Jesus Maria!' exclaimed the girl, in a low, tense whisper.

"'Yes, I turned him loose. I done as you said. Then he went off an' filled himself with pulque an' come at me with a machete. Look!' I showed her my blood-stained shirt front. 'He nearly done me up, but I got him in time with my gun.'

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“ ‘ You have killed him, you say ? ’

“ ‘ I believe so. ’

“ ‘ And you are not seriously hurt, mi Eduardo ? ’

“ ‘ I believe not,’ I answered fatuously, ‘ but I’ve got to get out of this place, you know, an’ I don’t want to go alone on a long journey. You’ve told me a thousand times you loved me more than anything else. Come with me now. We’ll go to a priest first an’ then pull out our freight fer the States.’

“ The girl had turned from the winder as I spoke. I could see her but dimly. She seemed to be fumbling at the bosom of her dress an’ I noticed that one little white hand clasped the bars of her winder as hard as if it had been steel. She spoke with a voice that was choked with some kind of emotion—I thought it was love for me.

“ ‘ The porter at the gate ? ’

“ ‘ I can attend to him. A few pesos will fix him. My man has two horses. Hark ! They are here now. Come ! ’

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“‘Immejitly, Eduardo,’ she answered quately, ‘I’ll meet you at the gate.’

“I fixed the porter all right. Them peons would sell their souls, if they had any, for a peso, an’ in a minute Dolores, wrapped in her rebosa, appeared. She had somethin’ in her right hand which she kept covered in the folds of the scarf.

“‘The horses are ready under the trees. We must hurry,’ I exclaimed, seizin’ her left hand an’ drawin’ her somewhat roughly across the road an’ into the shadow.

“‘Do I understand you aright, *mi querido Lalo?*’—the nickname for Eduardo as Lolita is for Dolores, you know—she panted, as we stopped near the horses, ‘you killed——’

“‘I’m sorry to say that I have.’

“‘*Señor*’—— cried my servant, as soon as he made us out in the gloom, but before he could add another word Dolores cried shrill:—

“‘You shall indeed go on a journey to-night. But not with me!’

Life of Mr. Tillottson

“She flung back her rebosa an’ a stray shaft of moonlight come down through the leaves an’ flashed on a cuchillo, a dagger. I had my arms open to take her to my heart fer the first time.

“‘You will go with Chon,’ she screamed, springin’ at me like a tigress an’ strikin’ me a fierce blow with her knife.

“It sounds like a novel, pardner, but I had a heavy purse faced with silver in my breast pocket. The point of that dagger hit the book, an’ although the force with which she struck me made a deep bruise in my flesh, I found out afterward the weepin glanced an’ the thrust spent itself between my breast an’ armpit, both of which it cut. The servant screamed, dropped the horses’ bridle reins an’ fled.

I reeled backward from the force of the blow an’ would have fallen had it not been for a friendly tree.

“‘Are you done fer?’ the girl cried. ‘No, you live!’

“She sprang at me again. In my dazed condition I suppose she would have finished me had not

An Earlier Episode in the

somethin' interfered. A pale, blood-stained figure, knife in hand, came bustin' through the trees.

“‘ Dolores! ’ cried a voice.

“‘ Madre de Dios! Chon! ’ screamed the girl, dropping her weepin an’ sinkin’ to her knees. ‘ Is it a spirit? ’

“‘ ’Tis I, Chon. He didn’t kill me. Now it’s my turn. This is no woman’s work. ’

“He raised the machete again, but them few seconds of time saved me. I had my gun out now an’ covered him. He stopped, irresolute.

“‘ You Mexican hound! ’ I hissed, ‘ there is just one thing that saves your life, an’ that’s yonder woman. She’s fooled me to the top of her bent. but I shan’t forget them kisses she gimme. ’

“I could see him writhin’ at that. They’re a jealous lot, them Mexicans, an’ that was some little revenge fer me. Lolita had sure played the love-makin’ game to the limit.

“‘ She played with me,’ I went on, ‘ an’ I’ve been a fool, but I’ll get even. I give her to you!

Life of Mr. Tillottson

You're a fine pair; you'll make it lively fer each other. Now, drop that machete on that dagger! Take the woman and light out.'

" 'I must go home,' said Dolores.

" 'You can't,' I answered grimly. 'The porter's shut the gate an' your father'd kill you if he saw you now. Tell me what you did this fer?'

" 'Fer Chon. Think you I could love you—a gringo sin verguenza—when he is by?'

" 'No, I suppose not,' I answered. 'Well, you've got him an' he's got you, an' the divil'll git the both of you. If I ketch you around here again, Chon, I'll kill you on sight.'

" 'May I have the machete, Jefe?' said the man, with astonishin' acquiescence in the situation.

" 'No, you may not, nor the dagger nuther. I want to keep 'em as souvenirs of this tropic love story. Skip, now! ''

" Did they go? "

" Caramba! I guess they did! They left lookin' into a six-shooter with me behind it, filled with jeal-

Earlier Episode in the Life of Mr. Tillottson

ousy an' rage an' humiliation. I could a killed 'em both, I was that mad. I never saw 'em again. That was a tough experience, the worst I ever had, with that kind of a female, although I've loved many of 'em, but gimme the American girls every time!"

"I have only loved one," I replied, "and here she comes," for my wife at that moment entered the hall.

"You're a married man, then?" commented the man, smiling. "These one only lovers usually are."

"I am."

"An' is that your wife?"

"Yes. Come over and I will introduce you."

"Pardner," said my new acquaintance impressively, as we rose to meet the approaching goddess, "from that sample yonder I takes it that you agrees with me that there ain't nuthin' like the American female on God's earth!"

I agreed.

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